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## **Sundance Institute Selects 11 Artists with VR and Emerging Media Storytelling Projects for New Frontier Story Lab**

**New Projects Explore Topics Including Biohacking,  
Homeless Queer Youth and Alien Abductions**



Rosie Haber | Silas Howard | Charlotte Stoudt | Laura Wexler | Heather Dewey-Hagborg | Toshiaki Ozawa  
Griffin Frazen | Poulomi Basu | Debra Anderson | Sutu | Charles Henden

**Los Angeles, CA** — Sundance Institute announced today the six projects selected for the annual **New Frontier Story Lab**, which supports independent artists working at the cutting-edge convergence of film, art, media, live performance and technology.

The New Frontier Story Lab is a week-long intensive that empowers creatives with individualized story sessions, conversations about key artistic, design and technology issues and case study presentations from experts in diverse related disciplines. Past participants include Roger Ross Williams, Yung Jake, Chris Milk, Hasan Minhaj, Tommy Pallotta, Navid and Vassiliki Khonsari, Karim Ben Khelifa, Tracy Fullerton and Yasmin Elayat. The Lab takes place May 17-22 at the Sundance Resort in Utah, under the guidance of Sundance Institute Feature Film Program Founding Director Michelle Satter and Kamal Sinclair, Director of New Frontier Lab Programs.

**Sinclair** said, "Our New Frontier Story Lab brings accomplished Fellows together to experiment with their projects as they continue to break new ground and challenge the ever-evolving medium. Interactions at the Lab empower



these emerging new media creators, explore different styles of storytelling and new ways of engaging audiences through experiential art.”

Creative Advisors and Industry Mentors for the Lab include: Kirsten Johnson (*Cameraperson*, *Citizenfour*), Sarah Treem (*House of Cards*, *The Affair*), Mark Monroe (*The Cove*, *Chasing Ice*), Anthony Sparks (*Queen Sugar*, *The Blacklist*), Paul Raphaël (Felix & Paul Studios, *Nomads*, *Wild*), Scott Snibbe (Bjork’s *Biophilia*, Philip Glass’ *Rework* and CEO of Eyegroove), Joan Tewkesbury (*Nashville*, *Chicago Hope*), Jessica Brillhart (Principal Filmmaker for VR, Google), Sharon Chang (Founder, Future Architects; *The Eagle Huntress*), Dana Dansereau (Interactive Producer, National Film Board of Canada, *Bear 71*, *Circa 1948*), Yasmin Elayat (Creative Director, Scatter NYC, *Zero Days VR*; *18 Days in Egypt*), Jess Engel (Director of Original Content, Within; *Happy*), Torfi Frans Ólafsson (Creative Director, EVE Universe IP at CCP Games), Suzanne Anker (Chair, SVA’s Fine Arts Department/Bio Art Laboratory), Navid Khonsari (Founder, Ink Stories, *1979 Revolution*, *Hero VR*; *Resident Evil*), Lauren McCarthy (*Follower*, *Social Turkers*; creator of [p5.js](#)), Saschka Unseld (Creative Director, Oculus Story Studio: *Henry*, *Dear Angelica*; *Through You*), Diana Williams (Creative Producer, Lucasfilm Story Group; ILMxLabs).

### **Meet the creative teams and projects selected for the 2017 Sundance Institute New Frontier Story Lab:**

#### ***Belle of the Ball***

#### **Rosie Haber and Silas Howard**

*Belle of the Ball* is an interactive VR experience, blurring the lines between documentary and fiction. Collaboratively created with queer and trans houseless youth in New York City, take the journey they face every day as they turn to the streets for resources, survival, and friendship. As day turns into night, you fall into the arms of your chosen family at an underground drag ball. 3D glitter never looked so good.

Silas Howard is an award-winning director and writer for feature and documentary film, music video, web series and television. Howard’s career took off in 2001, when his first feature film, *By Hook or By Crook* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, ultimately winning five Best Feature awards across the festival circuit. Recent television credits include *Transparent*, *This Is Us*, *The Fosters*, *Faking It* and *Hudson Valley Ballers*. This summer he’ll direct his third feature, *A Kid Like Jake*, starring Claire Danes, Jim Parsons and Octavia Spencer. On June 21, 2017 Showtime will release his latest feature documentary on six trans and gender nonconforming activists, titled *More Than T*.

Rosie Haber is an aesthetically minded writer and director. They took home the audience award at LA Film Festival and the New Orleans Film Festival and were nominated for a 2017 GLAAD award for their digital doc series *New Deep South*—the third episode of which premiered at 2017 Tribeca Film Festival. Haber has also been a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts grant, and a fellow at both Yaddo and MacDowell artist colonies. They are a writer on the upcoming film adaptation of the classic transgender novel *Stone Butch Blues*.

#### ***The Incident VR Series (Dinner Party, Eps 1)***

#### **Charlotte Stoudt and Laura Wexler**

*The Incident* is a VR anthology series that immersively dramatizes true-life unexplained mysteries. Inspired by Rod Serling’s *Twilight Zone*, each 10-15 minute episode provides a thrill ride into the supernatural; a gripping emotional story; and an exploration of the often unacknowledged social, psychological, or political tensions that inform the Incident’s central mystery. Episode One, “Dinner Party,” is based on the true story of Betty and Barney Hill, an interracial couple who reported America’s first nationally known UFO abduction incident in 1961.



Laura Wexler is a writer and producer whose writing credits include *Pandora's Box*, in development at Amazon Studios; the nonfiction book, *Fire in a Canebrake: The Last Mass Lynching in America* (Scribner); and journalism pieces published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and elsewhere. Producing credits include *The Stoop Storytelling Series*, a live show and podcast featuring “ordinary” people telling the extraordinary true tales of their lives.

Charlotte Stoudt is a writer-producer currently on Showtime's *Homeland*. She has worked extensively as a dramaturg, developing new plays at venues including The Kennedy Center, Baltimore's Center Stage, the Ojai Playwrights Festival and BAM. Holding a doctorate from Oxford University, she has written on the arts for the *Village Voice*, *Variety*, *Los Angeles Times* and National Public Radio.

### **T3511**

#### **Heather Dewey-Hagborg and Toshiaki Ozawa**

*T3511* is a post-genomic true love story of a biohacker's growing relationship to an anonymous donor. Told through an immersive living sculptural installation, *T3511* draws the viewer into an emerging world of ubiquitous genomic sequencing, biobanking, and commodification of human biological materials.

Heather Dewey-Hagborg is a transdisciplinary artist and educator who is interested in art as research and critical practice. She has shown work internationally at events and venues including the World Economic Forum, Shenzhen Urbanism and Architecture Biennale, the New Museum, and PS1 MOMA. Her work has been widely discussed in the media, from the *New York Times* and the BBC to TED and *Wired*. She is an Assistant Professor of Art and Technology Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a 2016 Creative Capital award grantee in the area of Emerging Fields.

Toshiaki Ozawa's history at Sundance includes lighting and cinematography for films *Angela* (1995), *I Shot Andy Warhol* (1996), *Buffalo 66* (1998), *America Psycho* (2000), *Closer* (2001), *On\_Line* (2002), *Personal Velocity* (2002), *Leonard Cohen: I'm Your Man* (2006), *Patti Smith: Dream of Life* (2008). A 2004 effort with Vincent Gallo and Chloe Sevigny, *The Brown Bunny*, simultaneously made *Cahiers du Cinema's* yearly top 10 and was named worst film in Cannes's history by Roger Ebert. Ozawa's 2015 collaboration with Laurie Anderson, *Heart of a Dog*, was shortlisted for the Academy Awards. Past artist and photographer collaborators include: Matthew Barney, Mike and Doug Starn, Richard Avedon, Albert Watson, Bruce Weber, Mario Testino, Leandro Katz, Isaac Julien, Mario Sorrenti, Terry Richardson, Enrique Badulescu, Anthony Cotsifas, Rankin, Santiago & Mauricio, Barnaby Roper, Toni Dove, Luke DuBois, and Marina Zurkow.

### **Counterpoint**

#### **Griffin Frazen**

In a time when technology is creating extraordinary extensions of human capabilities, the boundaries of private space have never been more vulnerable to penetration. *Counterpoint* is a narrative virtual reality film about a military drone operator who develops a perversely intimate relationship with his target.

Griffin Frazen is a designer and director. He holds a master's degree in architectural design from Princeton University. He won an Emmy in 2015 for outstanding main title design for *Manhattan*. Over the last three years, Frazen has worked as an independent director and designer for a range of mediums, at a variety of scales, including music videos, concerts, web and interactive projects. Currently, he is working with Here Be Dragons and SITU Research.



***A Ritual of Exile: Blood Speaks***  
**Poulomi Basu and Debra Anderson**

*A Ritual of Exile: Blood Speaks* is a transmedia activism and WebVR project that investigates the causes and consequences of normalized violence against women perpetrated under the guise of tradition. Focused on the ritual of Chaupadi in Nepal, viewers experience the brutal exile of women forced to live in isolation during their menstrual periods and following childbirth.

Poulomi Basu is a storyteller, transmedia artist and women's rights activist, whose work documents the role of women in isolated communities and conflict zones. Poulomi's ongoing work, *A Ritual Of Exile*, won the FotoEvidence Book Award 2017, Magnum Emergency Fund 2016, and was a W.Eugene Smith Finalist 2016. Her book, *Centralia*, is currently shortlisted for the MACK First Book Award and will be displayed in Photo London 2017. Additionally the Magnum Foundation also awarded her the *What Works* 2016 Human Right Fellow grant and she was nominee for the FOAM Paul Huff award in 2017 and 2015. She won the Firecracker 2nd place in 2015 for *Mothers of ISIS Fighters* which is due for an exhibition on *Poetics of War and Secrecy* in Oxford 2017.

Debra Anderson is a VR producer, director and entrepreneur who made her Cinematic VR debut in 2015 with *In\Formation*, a documentary in VR about VR featuring pioneers in the medium. She is currently co-creating and producing *A Ritual of Exile: Blood Speaks*, a WebVR storyworld that investigates normalized violence against women through the lens of Chaupadi, an illegal religious practice in Nepal. Debra is Co-founder and Chief Strategy Officer at Datavized, a software company building a 3D publishing platform for collaborative creation and distribution of immersive content on the web. Anderson founded and organizes the Women in VR Meetup in New York, designed and instructs the first Digital Development: WebVR course at Parsons School of Design, and has produced WebVR works for The National Film Board of Canada and Mozilla Corporation.

***Inside a Mind at War***  
**Sutu and Charles Henden**

"When you sign up for the military you know that you might witness death, but you never receive any training to learn how to cope with it," explained American-Iraq War Veteran Scott England. This immersive virtual reality project explores the banality and horrors of war and England's battle with mental illness through hand-drawn illustrations of places based on his memories.

Sutu is an Australian artist exploring the intersection of creativity, technological innovation and social justice. Over the last decade, he pioneered new technologies for telling stories in new ways. Through his work with Big hART, Australia's leading arts and social Justice organization, he has directed community development projects including *Neomad - the Gold Ledger*, an award-winning comic book that is currently optioned to become animated series. He is the founder of EyeJack, an Augmented Reality art publishing company. Sutu has been commissioned to create immersive VR experiences for Doctor Strange and Google. His work has won Webby, FWA, ATOM, Ledger and JMAF awards and he was a nominee for the 2015 Eisner and Future of Storytelling Awards.

Charles Henden is a creative engineer with a passion for bringing interactive worlds to life. With a career stretching from licensed movie titles on the Nintendo Wii to real-time sports simulations on the PlayStation 4, nothing has excited Charles more than his current work with the emerging potential of VR, AR and Mixed Reality platforms.

**Amelia Winger-Bearskin (Creative Observer)**

Amelia Winger-Bearskin will attend this year's Lab as Creative Observer; she'll reflect on the learnings generated over the week and share those reflections through Sundance Institute's website, newsletter and social platforms. Winger-Bearskin is an artist, creative director and organizer who develops cultural communities at the intersection of art, technology and advocacy. She founded and directed the DBRS Innovation Labs, co-founded VRSalon.org and the Stupid Hackathon, and her project credits include *Imagination Codes* and *#Drowning*.

The Sundance Institute New Frontier Story Lab is supported by Cindy Harrell Horn and Alan Horn, Lyn and Norman Lear, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Turner, Dell, and Nokia OZO.

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**Sundance Institute**

Founded in 1981 by Robert Redford, Sundance Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides and preserves the space for artists in film, theatre, and new media to create and thrive. The Institute's signature Labs, granting, and mentorship programs, dedicated to developing new work, take place throughout the year in the U.S. and internationally. The Sundance Film Festival and other public programs connect audiences to artists in igniting new ideas, discovering original voices, and building a community dedicated to independent storytelling. Sundance Institute has supported such projects as *Boyhood*, *Swiss Army Man*, *Manchester By the Sea*, *Brooklyn*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Life, Animated*, *Sonita*, *20 Feet From Stardom*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *Fruitvale Station*, *Sin Nombre*, *Spring Awakening*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* and *Fun Home*. Join [Sundance Institute](#) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

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