

Danish researcher's wild virtual LGBTQ + museum has been nominated for a prestigious award

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The marble statue 'Memorial of a marriage' is one of the main attractions at the LGBTQ + VR Museum.

The LGBTQ + VR Museum project has been nominated for an award at this year's Tribeca Film Festival. The perspectives behind the virtual museum are great, says the Danish researcher behind it.

He actually comes from a project that is rooted in horror.

"My daily life consists of measuring how scared people become," says Thomas Terkildsen, who is a researcher and psychologist at Aarhus University's Faculty of Arts and leads the project APEX of Fear, where he and a team of researchers through psychology and virtual reality try to find the *sweet spot* of fear.

But right now, much of Thomas Terkildsen's time is spent getting ready to go to the Tribeca Film Festival in early June.

The project LGBTQ + VR Museum has been nominated for an award in the category 'New Voices'. A project that Thomas Terkildsen is the main architect behind together with his English colleague Antonia Forster. Architect in the sense that it is actually Thomas Terkildsen who has designed the entire virtual museum.

"It is not difficult to put up an extra wall or expand the museum if that is what you need. There one is somewhat more limited in the physical world. That way, it is extremely powerful," says Thomas Terkildsen.

Stand with the museum objects in your hands

The museum is, as museums are most. It contains objects and art that tell a story. But this virtual reality museum is the first of its kind, according to the researchers behind it, who tell the stories of LGBTQ + people.

Thomas Terkildsen and Antonia Forster - who are both under the LGBTQ + umbrella - have asked people in the environment about objects that tell a personal story.

The objects have been photographed by researchers using a technology called photogrammetry, which creates a virtual 3D object of a physical object.

Therefore, at the VR Museum you can stand with a pair of shoes that a woman got married in, see a book that a man used to tell his parents that he was gay, or get really close to the museum's main attraction - a marble statue of two women sleeping while holding each other.

The statue, 'Memorial to a Marriage', was created by Patricia Cronin and shows herself and her wife, but was created back in 2002, when it was not legal to enter into a marriage with one of the same sex.

"For us, the goal is to provide a space where stories from this environment can be told. It is rarely the stories of the marginalized that we get told in the classical museums, which most often make room for the stories of the white, gay, heterosexual men, «says Thomas Terkildsen and continues:

"None of us had the opportunity to make a physical museum, but we wanted to do something to unfold these stories. There, the virtual space is obvious. "

Get transported into another world

For the Tribeca Film Festival, guests will be able to experience the LGBTQ + VR Museum, and the plan is then to make it available free of charge, so that anyone with a VR headset will be able to visit the museum.

For the festival, guests can also be equipped with a heart rate monitor and a sweat production meter in the palms. Because even though the project was not created for a research purpose, it is still interesting for Thomas Terkildsen to measure how audiences react to the museum's content.



'Virtual reality provides really good opportunities to examine how people react emotionally to what they see. Hopefully you will see - and feel - that the stories from these people reason in one. That we are emotional beings, and it is we who must create a world where we can all be,' says Thomas Terkildsen and continues:

"Basically, it's about being able to create an understanding of worlds that you are not a part of. For example, a VR project on climate change has shown that people changed their minds about climate change by being in Greenland and watching the ice melt through VR. It can really be something to be transported into life worlds that you do not have access to - and it is also interesting from a purely research point of view. "

The museum is expanding

The plan with the museum is that new objects can enter it on an ongoing basis. For example, Antonia Forster and Thomas Terkildsen have been asked by the Danish consulate in New York if they want to make an exhibition where they tell stories from the LGBTQ + community in New York.

»We hope that we can create a platform where we can have a large catalog of stories, so you can visit the museum more than once and always get new stories. And then it could be interesting if museums or other organizations in the real world can see an idea in having this kind of exhibition with them, so that we can create real change, "he says.

The VR Museum will be available for download immediately after the Tribeca festival.



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