COLLISIONS
The inaugural Virtual Reality film from the Sundance Institute New Frontier | Jaunt VR Residency Program

Photo Credit: Piers Mussared

VR Experience • 15 minutes • English & Martu • www.CollisionsVR.com

Sundance Film Festival 2016 – New Frontier

New Frontier Exhibition
ClaimJumper at 573 Main St.
Friday, January 22–Friday, January 29 • 1:00–5:00 p.m.

New Frontier Gateway
136 Heber Ave.
Friday, January 22–Friday, January 29 • 5:30–8:00 p.m. VR BAR
Saturday, January 30 • 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Synchronized Screening (First-Ever at Sundance Film Festival)
Egyptian Theatre at 328 Main Street
Monday, January 25 • 3:00 PM

PRESS CONTACT
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SYNOPSIS: COLLISIONS

*Collisions*, directed by artist/filmmaker Lynette Wallworth, is a virtual reality journey to the homeland of indigenous elder Nyarri Morgan and the Martu tribe in the remote Western Australian Pilbara desert. The Martu lived largely untouched by Western culture until the 1960’s.

Nyarri’s first contact with western culture came in the 1950’s via a dramatic collision between his traditional world view and the cutting edge of Western science and technology when he witnessed firsthand and with no context, an atomic test.

Nyarri offers us a view to what he saw and, reflecting on this extraordinary event, shares his perspective on the Martu way to care for the planet. COLLISIONS focuses on the needs of future generations as we dive head-long into the fourth industrial revolution.

Through the use of the world’s most immersive technology in combination with Wallworth’s world-class storytelling, the audience of *Collisions* is invited to experience an alternative understanding of long-term decision making via one of the world’s oldest cultures. It highlights our inability to imagine the possible unintended consequences of our actions — provoking thought around the environment and the sustainable use of the world’s resources with a view to the generations to come.

*Collisions* is a story we urgently need to hear as we struggle to develop a meaningful response to the human-induced climate change of our shared planet.
FROM THE SUNDANCE PROGRAM

Lynette Wallworth returns to the Festival (her works *Evolution of Fearlessness* and *Coral: Rekindling Venus* played at the 2008 and 2013 Sundance Film Festivals respectively) with this stunning and deeply poetic live-action/animated immersive documentary, which she is presenting at the 2016 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Journey with the artist to a remote desert in Western Australia at the invitation of indigenous elder Nyarri Morgan and the Martu tribe. Morgan recounts his profound first contact with Western culture, and the dramatic collision between his traditional worldview and the cutting edge of modern technology.

*Photo Credit: Piers Mussared*
I first heard of Nyarri’s story four years ago on a hunting trip with the Martu women painters in the Western Desert. Hearing that I had been to Maralinga where Britain tested atomic bombs in the 1950’s, Nyarri’s wife Nola turned to me with what felt like an instruction...

"You have to talk to Nyarri."

A year later I did just that and I heard a short powerful parable that Nyarri had waited almost his entire life to share. So this work was born, as a thought or an imagining.

I hadn’t yet experienced Virtual Reality and I was waiting to decide the form that would best suit this work. I experienced my first VR film, almost a year ago to today and when I saw it I knew how to make Nyarri’s story come alive.

I have worked in immersive environments for over 20 years and I felt like VR was the technology I had been waiting for. At the same time Sundance New Frontiers Institute co-directors Shari Frilot and Kamal Sinclair had exactly the same thought. A partnership with Jaunt VR has made Collisions a reality but only with the inexhaustible, unflappable energy of producer Nicole Newnham.

I love new technology. I love the moment when the viewer experiences a new sensation for the first time. I know that moment gets seared into memory. I also believe in the power of story to reshape us collectively. I think the two belong together.

VR will soon hit in a big way, very possibly to become ubiquitous. In the window of time that exists before then I wanted to make a work that has protocols of meeting at its core. Nyarri’s world is only available to me to visit, and in this work through the technology, that invitation is extended to the viewer. The agency in Collisions belongs to Nyarri. When I put the camera down in front of him he said, “It has sixteen eyes.” I replied that it has sixteen eyes and four ears. From that moment Nyarri become the one who decided what was seen and what was not to be seen, what was told and what was not told. The powerful sense of presence of VR makes everything personal. Nyarri knew who it was he was speaking to.

So this work is something of a gift sent out from a private world. It contains an old story, held close till now. It is a film that bridges cultures, it has two narrators and it has two old men at its heart. It contains an old story, held close till now. It is a technological message in a bottle to a world that teeters on the edge of climate catastrophe but it is a message shared with a fundamental hope in our capacity to contemplate more carefully the consequences of our actions.

At the World Economic Form in Davos and the Sundance Film Festival in Park City with Nyarri travelling for the first time out of Australia to join us, I am so happy to able to share this experience with you.
**THE COLLISIONS EXPERIENCE**

*Collisions* is Wallworth’s third work with the Martu people of the Western Desert. It is narrated by Wallworth and Nyarri Morgan’s grandson Curtis Taylor. We are reminded that everything we are about to see is what Nyarri Morgan wants to show us. “He has,” Wallworth informs us, “a story he wants to share.”

Against the endless horizon of the Western Australian desert, a red dust cloud rises from the road marking the progress of a small convoy of rugged all-terrain vehicles.

Through soaring drone photography, we are immersed immediately in the breathtaking scope of this vast and ancient landscape. But here, time, we are told, does not move in a straight line. Events can collide even when they are separated by generations. That is a key to the heart of this work.

Two old men whose lives are joined are about to meet, though they lived worlds apart.

Wallworth reminds us, “God appears to some in the desert.”

We are welcomed first in song by the man who has invited us, elder Nyarri Nyarri Morgan, and introduced to his family including grandson Curtis. Nyarri thanks us for coming “from a long way away.”

After this meeting we learn that Wallworth has brought some archival films to show Nyarri. As we move with him to an outdoor cinema scene, we are shown the hill filled with uranium that this community was founded near in order to protect.

At twilight, Nyarri and family gather at the outdoor cinema set up on the outskirts of the community. Toyota batteries power the simple projector. The screen comes to life with what feels like a retro ethnographic film — featuring imagery from the Los Alamos desert...this other desert where Robert Oppenheimer’s atomic bomb would be developed and tested.

We may have believed we were in an immersive virtual reality film about an “exotic native tribe,” but we are actually watching an ethnographic film about our own culture’s history.

Beside us, Nyarri gesticulates as the father of the atomic bomb counts down to an atomic collision that changed the world. Curtis tells us, “That day Nyarri saw a thing he had no words for. It would be 20 years before he heard the words *atomic bomb.*”

The utterance of these words throws us into Nyarri’s vision. What he saw was not a bomb at all, but a spirit rising up from the country to speak with him.

In the film’s powerful animated sequence, kangaroos try desperately to flee the aftershock and are ploughed to the ground, ash covers the boiling water sources and Nyarri searches for meaning to an event that he cannot explain. It appears that God has poisoned the country.
Emerging from the animation, Nyarri is sitting quietly by a campfire in contemplation of the events we have just witnessed for the first time. We saw what it was this old man saw. This is the story he has held and is now sharing for the first time.

In the dark we hear another old man’s voice, this time the aged Oppenheimer, a man who was able to reflect on the forces that drove a deadly decision. Approaching the screen again and alone, Nyarri and the old man meet as Oppenheimer tells what it was that he saw:

We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed, a few people cried, most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita. Vishnu is trying to persuade the Prince that he should do his duty and to impress him takes on his multi-armed form and says, ‘Now, I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.’ I suppose we all thought that one way or another.

A desert starscape opens up above making us small and insignificant. It carries us gently to the dawn over country that Nyarri loves, stewards and protects. Curtis tells us succinctly, “In this country, every rock is known.” He translates Nyarri’s words about looking after the country for thousands of years so it “can be good for the ones who are coming.” In one of the film’s most powerful moments, the old man states simply, “We give them the world and they might keep it good.” This is multi-generational communal thinking, embodied.

We return to a scene that we saw at the start of the film, an epic tree surrounded by charred, smoldering ground. We are reminded of what Wallworth told us at the start: time does not move in a straight line here. We watch as Nyarri begins to set ablaze the low spinifex, surrounding the tree, and Curtis informs us, “this is Martu knowledge,” creating mosaics of controlled burning to prevent wild fires and generate new growth.

We are seeing in action what 1400 generations of habitation in one place leads to: a form of relationship with country that sustains and preserves it. As Nyarri leaves the growing blaze he asks, “Who will take care of this fire for the ones who are on their way?”

We lift up over the beautiful blaze that we now comprehend, as Nyarri, below, tends to it like a shepherd. We know he is going; he has told us. His final words are instructions and we are left to contemplate our next move as the fire below us fades away.

In the film’s epilogue, Nyarri sits painting the bomb that he saw in the film. We are becoming part of a history that he is now telling. As he sits quietly painting, we hear on the radio that the Martu are again, thirty years since they returned here, faced with another fight against a uranium mine. Time collides.
KEY FACTS ABOUT COLLISIONS

Directed by the acclaimed filmmaker and artist Lynette Wallworth from Australia known for her use of interactive technologies. [See bio below.]

Geography and Cultural Protocols

• The film, which focuses on the indigenous Martu tribe, was entirely shot in a very remote part of Australia.

• Using the cutting-edge VR camera technology best suited for remote communities that want to tell their own stories to the world outside their region, Wallworth developed a unique storytelling approach that incorporates cultural protocols for meeting and involves production team members, including herself, who have long-standing relationships with the Martu community.

About the Production

• Wallworth was selected as the inaugural artist of the Sundance Institute New Frontier | Jaunt VR Residency Program and Collisions is the first project to be created as part the program. Keri Putnam, Executive Director of Sundance Institute says, “Virtual reality and other multimedia forms are accelerating the evolution of storytelling, and we are excited to collaborate with Jaunt Studios to provide independent artists the space and resources to experiment with these technologies. We hope their unique voices, diverse perspectives and creativity will help define the potential of this new medium.”

• Produced by Emmy-nominated filmmaker Nicole Newnham (San Francisco Bay Area). [See producing team bios below.]

• Wallworth and Newnham recruited an incredible team of artists, filmmakers, and engineers, including veterans like 3-time Oscar nominee Tom Myers of Skywalker Sound and effects experts at Technicolor and Dolby to develop one of the most advanced art and film storytelling experiences ever developed for the VR platform.

• They were able to galvanize an impressive group of funders, including the Skoll Foundation Sundance “Stories of Change” program, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur program, the Ford Foundation/ JustFilms, The Fledgling Fund, the Australia Council for the Arts, the Adelaide International Film Festival, the Omidyar Network and Jaunt VR.

About the Synchronized Screenings at World Economic Forum in Davos and Sundance Film Festival's New Frontier in Park City

Collisions is a story about connection, and multi generational thinking. Given this, the team behind Collisions has sought to find a way to provide a collective experience for VR’s individual viewing technology. Partnering with Two Bit Circus VR for world’s first synchronized screening events at both the World Economic Forum in Davos and then at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, Collisions will be viewed by groups of up to two hundred at a time, all starting and finishing their Collisions experience together – making this unique...
immersive experience, a collective dream of a shared past and our collective future.

**About the Immersive Experience**

With the Gear VR headset and headphones on, the film’s powerful animation sequence gives a gripping sensation of the visceral force of the atomic blast that levels everything in its way. This counters powerfully with the sensation of being with Mr. Morgan as he moves about his homeland, seeing the detail in the vast, searing landscape where, as his grandson tells us "every rock is known."

**Recent Hollywood Attention to Indigenous Issues**

"I want to share this award with all the First Nations people represented in this film and all the indigenous communities around the world. It is time that we recognized your history and that we protect your indigenous lands from corporate interests and people that are out there to exploit them. It is time that we heard your voice and protected this planet for future generations." –Leonardo DiCaprio, upon accepting the award for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama for his role in *The Revenant* at the Golden Globes 2016.

DiCaprio will be honored at the World Economic Forum in Davos this month.
ABOUT THE ARTIST & DIRECTOR

Lynette Wallworth

Lynette Wallworth is an acclaimed Australian artist and director whose immersive installations and films reflect connections between people and the natural world, as well as explore fragile human states of grace.

Her work uses immersive environments, interactive technologies with gestural interfaces and narrative long form film to engage with viewers. The environments often rely on activation by the participant/viewer. The activation of the work becomes a metaphor for our connectedness within biological, social and ecological systems.

Often engaged with emerging technologies, Wallworth has previously exhibited her works—interactive installation *Evolution of Fearlessness*, a moving portrait of 11 women who lived beyond the state of fear (many of them political prisoners and survivors of war and trauma), and the fulldome feature *Coral: Rekindling Venus*, which has an accompanying augmented-reality poster collection—at the Sundance Film Festival, New Frontier.

Wallworth’s film *Tender* went on to win AACTA (Australian Academy of Cinema and Television Arts Awards) for best televised documentary and was nominated for a Grierson Award in the UK. *Collisions* was edited by *Tender* editor Kaz de Cinque with sound recording by *Tender* sound designer Liam Egan.

Wallworth’s work has shown at the World Economic Forum, Davos, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the American Museum of Natural History, New York, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, the Smithsonian, Royal Observatory Greenwich for the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad; Auckland Triennial; Adelaide Biennial; Brighton Festival and the Vienna Festival among many others as well as various film festivals including the Sundance Film Festival, London Film Festival, Glasgow Film Festival, Sydney Film Festival, Adelaide Film Festival, Margaret Mead Film Festival.
ABOUT THE PRODUCER

Nicole Newnham

Nicole Newnham is a documentary producer and director, Sundance Film Festival alumnus and four-time Emmy nominee. Among her films are *The Revolutionary Optimists*, winner of the Sundance Hilton Sustainability Award, and *Sentenced Home*, both of which aired on PBS' series *Independent Lens*. She instigated, produced and directed *The Rape of Europa* about the Nazi war on European culture, for which she was nominated for a WGA award and shortlisted for the Academy Award. Nicole is an innovator in leveraging story and technology for social change, as the co-founder of a data-mapping platform for youth, *Map Your World*.

ALSO ON THE TEAM

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Patrick Meegan

Patrick Meegan is a filmmaker, game designer, and translator between creative and engineering teams. He has collaborated with researchers at Microsoft Research, Intel Labs, and USC's World Building Media Lab on interactive cinema, augmented and virtual reality projects. He currently works as a virtual reality filmmaker at Jaunt VR in Palo Alto. In addition to tackling the technical challenges of 3D-spherical video production, Patrick works passionately to discover and define the grammar and mechanics of virtual reality storytelling and expression.

EDITOR

Karryn de Cinque

Since graduating in 1999 from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Karryn de Cinque has worked primarily in documentary, winning numerous awards and receiving multiple nominations from the Australian Screen Editors Association, as well as a 2015 Australian Academy of Cinema and Television (AACTA) nomination for best editing in a Feature Documentary for her work on *Tender*, directed by Lynette Wallworth. Karryn has also cut more than 20 short films, and her latest work *Nulla Nulla* was recently nominated for a Crystal Bear at the 2015 Berlin Film Festival, and an AACTA Award for best short film.

SOUND RECORDIST

Liam Egan

Liam Egan has nearly 30 years experience as a freelance sound designer, sound editor and sound recordist. In that time he has been the sound designer on over 30 feature films and he has been a sound editor and sound recordist on many more features. Liam has also been the sound designer on countless short films, documentaries, television series and multimedia projects. He has been nominated for and/or won many awards including AFI, AACTA, ASSG, IF, Golden Reel (MPSE), Flickerfest and Apollo awards. Some of his recent
awarded work includes *Samson and Delilah, Beneath Hill 60, Storm Surfers 3D, The Hunter, Satellite Boy, The Broken Shore, Red Obsession* and *Tender*. He has recently completed work on *Strangerland, Beast, Ruben Guthrie* and is currently working on *The Daughter*. Liam has collaborated with Lynette on *Rekindling Venus*, two installation projects with the Martu people of the Pilbara and also the documentary *Tender*.

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**

**Cori Shepherd Stern – Executive Producer**

Cori Shepherd Stern is an Academy-nominated filmmaker who focuses on both documentary and fiction film projects. Her recent credits include box office and critical success *Warm Bodies*, released by Summit and Lionsgate, and *Open Heart*, a 2013 Oscar nominee for Best Documentary Short Subject. *Collisions* is the inaugural project of Stern and Nicole Newnham’s new production entity, *Infinite Field*.

**Gigi Pritzker – Executive Producer**

Gigi Pritzker is an accomplished film and stage producer, businesswoman, and an active philanthropist, who serves as co-founder and CEO of film production and financing company OddLot Entertainment. Through OddLot Entertainment, which she founded in 2001, Pritzker has teamed with leading filmmakers to produce a range of high-quality, often literary-based motion pictures, such as 2010’s Academy Award-nominated adult drama *Rabbit Hole*, 2013’s critically acclaimed comedy hit *The Way, Way Back* starring Steve Carell, the film adaptation of the futuristic sci-fi novel *Ender’s Game* and the critically acclaimed directorial debut of Jon Stewart’s *Rosewater* which debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival. She is a member of The Sundance Institute Board of Trustees.

**Diana Barrett – Executive Producer**

Diana Barrett is president of The Fledgling Fund, a New York based private foundation that supports films and other creative media, primarily through finishing funds and community engagement programs. Diana received a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Nonfiction Special for *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib* and a News & Documentary Emmy Award for Outstanding Business and Economic Reporting - Long Form for the POV documentary *Good Fortune*.

**Sandy Herz – Executive Producer**

Sandy Herz is the Director of Global Partnerships at the Skoll Foundation. She cultivates strategic alliances and storytelling partnerships for the Skoll Foundation, with a portfolio that includes Sundance, NPR, PBS NewsHour, Public Radio International, and HarperOne, as well as flagship relationships with Oxford University and Ashoka. Consistent with Skoll’s mission, Sandy seeks out world-class storytellers and platforms to create broader awareness of, engagement with, and impact from the work of leading social entrepreneurs.
The Jaunt virtual reality camera on a drone over a landscape of fires burning spinifex, an ancient Martu land management practice.

Nyarri prepares for filming the painting scene.
Nyarri tries virtual reality for the first time.
Behind-the-scenes of the Collisions production.