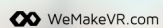


a surreal, tragicomedy in virtual reality



# Ashes to Ashes





# ASHES TO ASHES



Ashes to Ashes is a surreal tragicomedy in virtual reality. At first sight, the film seems to be about a dysfunctional family burdened with the bizarre dying wish of their recently deceased grandfather. Seen from the perspective the urn containing the ashes, we encounter the colorful family members, who each seem to live in a reality of their own creation.

Ashes to Ashes is an experience designed to challenge the viewer to distinguish what is real from what is not. Ultimately the film questions if there is, in fact, a clear dividing line between reality and fiction. Aren't we all living in our own world?

## VR EXPERIMENT

As a storytelling medium it is in its infancy, creating good VR requires careful and complex work. With Ashes to Ashes we wanted to explore how visual storytelling works in a filmed 360 3D world. As part of this exploration we invited three directors from different professional backgrounds to join forces; Steye Hallema (VR), Ingejan Ligthart Schenk (theater), and Jamille van Wijngaarden (film). Peter McLaughlin worked on the project as DOP and was in charge of the post production. Benjamin de Wit, co-organizer of the VR Days Europe, is the executive producer and initiated the project together with WeMakeVR.

The film is written by Anne Barnhoorn, one of the most awarded screenwriters in The Netherlands.

What started out as an experiment during the VR Days Europe in 2015 expanded into the short VR film Ashes to Ashes.

- **Ashes to Ashes is a unique experience**
- **Filmed in one long shot.**
- **Directed by 3 directors**
- **First VR film by Submarine Channel**

Language: English  
Duration: 11 minutes

## Links & Downloads

[ashes.submarinechannel.com](https://ashes.submarinechannel.com)

Teaser  
[vimeo](#)

Making of  
[vimeo](#)

Lessons learnt  
[submarinechannel.com](https://submarinechannel.com)

Images  
[submarinechannel.com](https://submarinechannel.com)







***"IF WOODY ALLEN AND JIM JARMUSCH WOULD MAKE A VR FILM TOGETHER,  
ASHES TO ASHES WOULD BE THE RESULT"*** -CANAAN RUBEN, PRODUCER JAUNT VR







Ashes to Ashes is a co-production between Submarine Channel and AVROTROS – the largest Dutch broadcaster, in collaboration with production house WeMakeVR – a pioneer in the Dutch VR scene,

Jaunt VR – world leader in cinematic VR, Force Field VR – a company specialized in 3D content for VR and AR, and Big Orange – a sound studio with a track record in spatial audio.



# THE STORY



Ashes to Ashes is a surreal, tragicomedy in virtual reality about how a dysfunctional family handles the dying wish of their grandfather. Seen through the 'eyes' of the deceased –the urn containing the ashes– this eleven minute VR film gives a unique point of view on a bizarre set of family relationships that are ready to blow up. We witness how each family member drops their pretences to reveal the full extent of their dishonesty.

The scenes appear to take place on a movie set, as different levels of reality unveil. Meanwhile, the youngest member of the family, Fie, says goodbye to her grandfather in her own way.

Ultimately, Ashes to Ashes is about choosing your own reality, your imagination, your world.











# DIRECTORS STATEMENT



## CONTENT

In Virtual Reality, you create your own reality. You are, in effect, the director and you direct yourself in order to follow the story in a linear way from beginning to end. You are entirely free to look around and to make choices in the film that you are watching. This ties in well with the content of our film.

This film is about the dividing line between reality and fiction – which one is really real? Ashes to Ashes is set to be an original Virtual Reality film in which a surreal situation unfolds on the deceased grandfather's house boat. The family discusses what to do with 'Grampa Git's' ashes. Seen from the urn, this film gives a unique point of view on a bizarre set

of family relationships that are ready to explode. However, this reality in actual fact turns out to be a fiction, which adds a whole new dimension to the film.

In the story, Grampa Git turns out to have a very eccentric wish when it comes to his ashes. It is clear that he took a childish delight in dreaming this up while he was still alive. When it transpires that the whole story is actually taking place on a film set, it is the youngest character, Fie, who refuses to accept this and surrenders herself completely to the film reality. To her, there is no distinction between the script and the real world. It is an ode to Grampa, an ode to the imagination, an ode to childlike innocence.





## THE SCREENPLAY

Our intention from the start was to play around with different realities. The film starts with a prologue, spoken by Grampa Git. His voice is powerful, charismatic and a bit cheeky. He did exactly what he liked while he was alive, and he plans to do the same in death. Despite his name, we sympathise with him. This form is still relatively uncharted territory in VR, but we believe this is the best way to make the viewer believe they are seeing things from Grampa's perspective. In a corner of the room, Fie is unobtrusively muttering along with Grampa's words. Over the course of the film, the viewer discovers that the characters are, in fact, on a film set and that they are being played by actors. But the 'fictitious' reality will always be the 'real' reality to Fie. Are we, the viewer and the actors/characters part of a film, or are we part of Fie's world?

The film begins in the film reality, a very stylised world. There is a lot of attention to detail. The acting is formal and serious, but believable. This is the reality the characters exist in. We are in an absurd situation, with characters that are larger than life, and this is emphasized in the visual style.

At the start of the story, the audience becomes part of this unusual family, to say the least. The colorful characters all have their own eccentric traits and defining features. The actors move around the camera and, in doing so, draw the audience's gaze to where they want it to be, allowing the mise-en-scène to serve as the film's decoupage.

The first scene ends with Fie firing a flare gun and the drapes catching fire. This is the moment that we become aware that we are on a film set, and a new layer of reality unveils. Swiftly and competently, technical assistants rush on set and put out the fire. The walls of the house boat turn out to be pieces of scenery on wheels that are rolled away. Behind the world that we were just in, we find a very different world. It is also stylised and imaginative, and perfectly orchestrated. We instantly get the measure of this new reality. The camera (which is us, the viewer) stands still, while the room around us changes completely. Now that everything turns out to be a film set, are we still the dead grandfather? To Fie, we are still the urn. Set or no set, Fie cares about her grandfather's fate. Her reality remains constant.







# CREATIVE TEAM



## Jamille van Wijngaarden – Film Director

Jamille van Wijngaarden (1989) is a film and commercial director. In 2012 she won the award for her commercial 'Snow White' at the Prix Europe Festival in Berlin in the category 'Languages through Lenses' for 'Best Video on Multilingualism of the year'. She graduated in 2014 as a film director (fiction) at the Netherlands Film Academy and was praised for her graduation film 'Happily Never After', a humorous crime set in a fairy tale village. She now happily resides under the wings of 25FPS Commercial Production Company, working on mainly TV adverts. But with a heart in drama and fiction she uses her strong storytelling capabilities in film and television.

## Ingejan Ligthart Schenk - Theatre Director

When Ingejan Ligthart Schenk (1971) graduates from the Arnhem Academy of Dramatic Art in 1995, he already is closely involved with the theatre company 't Barre Land (1992-2013), both as an actor and theatre maker. He continues with acting and directing, until 2013 when he becomes the artistic director of the Amsterdamse Bos theater. Here he is both managing director and director (Cyrano, 2013). Further he is known as an actor for Leven en dood van Quidam Quidam (1999), De ontmaskering van de Vastgoedfraude (2013) and Baantjer (1995). At the moment he teaches students of the Toneelschool Amsterdam.

## Steye Hallema - VR Director

Steye Hallema (1976) is a composer, musician, filmmaker and artist. He studied Image and Sound at the art academy and the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague. He is co-founder of the multimedia theatre collective PIPS:lab and has been part of this group for thirteen years (1999-2013)



He worked for the VPRO Medialab. He is the creative brain behind the VR-film the VPRO PEEPSHOW, VR FILM as part of the TV series – Mis-sie aarde and De Upgrade, that is part of the tv program de Volmaakte mens. Steye also worked as a creative director for Jaunt VR and is the initiator & composer of the Smartphone Orchestra,

## Anne Barnhoorn – Screenplay

Screen writer Anne Barnhoorn (1982) has won the Golden Calf, a prestigious award of the Netherlands Film Festival, for the script of the film Aanmodderfakker (2014). Previously she has worked on the script for the film "De Ontmaagding van Eva van End (2012) and Alex in Amsterdam (2009). She graduated in direction of screenplay from the Film Academy in 2008.

## Peter McLaughlin - DOP / post production supervisor

Having a film-making background, Peter has used his prior skills and knowledge to develop a unique style in capturing and directing virtual reality based experiences. He is now currently working with WeMakeVR to create original content for an ever-expanding pool of clients across all different market sectors. In November 2016 he directed the Project Orpheus VR Experience in partnership with the ACIN, MediaLab Amsterdam, AVROTROS, NL Film, WeMakeVR and AMP Amsterdam.







## VR DAYS EUROPE

VR Days is the starting place of Ashes to Ashes. This annual event is a breeding place for new content.

Benjamin de Wit, founder of VR Days in 2015 and still working at WeMakeVR at that time, wanted to do an experiment with content creation in VR.

This experiment took place at the first VR Days event in Europe in collaboration with AVROTROS, Submarine Channel and We-MakeVR.

Since VR Days has grown out to become Europe's leading creative professional VR event where the creative crème of Europe meets and where new content gets initiated.



## ABOUT SUBMARINE CHANNEL

Submarine Channel explores the narrative possibilities of new and emerging genres such as the interactive documentary, the interactive graphic novel, transmedia storytelling, and virtual reality. The channel diffuses this new-found knowledge to international audiences, using diverse platforms to do so.

Notable projects include the transmedia documentary Last Hijack Interactive (Emmy Award: Best Digital Fiction, 2015), the transmedia game Collapsus – Energy Risk Conspiracy (Emmy nomination: Best Digital Fiction, 2012), the motion comic The Art of Pho (Prix Europa, 2013), and the multiple award-winning interactive documentary Refugee Republic (2015).

Submarine Channel is part of the award-winning production outfit Submarine, founded in 2000 by Bruno Felix and Femke Wolting, pioneers in the Dutch (new) media world.

Submarine Channel is made possible with the financial support of Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie (The Creative Industries Fund NL), and Kunstenplan Amsterdam.

Contact: **Corine Meijers** / Interactive producer Submarine Channel  
corine@submarine.nl  
+31 (0)20 8204940

[submarinechannel.com](http://submarinechannel.com)





# CREDITS



directed by Ingejan Ligthart Schenk  
Jamilie van Wijngaarden  
Steye Hallema

written by Anne Barnhoorn

DOP / post production  
supervisor Peter McLaughlin

executive producer Benjamin De Wit

## Cast

Bo Boekelman as Fie  
Finn Moskos as Jonas  
Roos Drenth as Simone  
Janna Fassaert as Ellen  
Jeremiah Fleming as John  
Antonie Knoppers as Anton  
Viktor Griffioen as Mark  
Hank Botwinik as Grandpa  
Ruby Jonker as stand-in for Fie

for AVROTROS  
commissioning editor Mylene Verdurmen

for Submarine Channel  
producers

line producer Bruno Felix  
production managers Femke Wolting  
Corine Meijers  
Judith Leddy-Ratten  
Nathalie Nijkamp

for WeMakeVR  
executive producer Avinash Changa  
production managers Diede Bron  
Mart Maes

## Crew

recording engineer Casper Thiel  
grip Peter Tambach  
grip materials Gripwise  
gaffer Mark Huisman

production sound mixer Antoin Cox CAS

sound / music Big Orange  
creative audio director Vincent de Koning

VR development studio Force Field VR  
executive producer Bridget Erdmann  
art director Edwin van Gessel  
VFX artist Tom Jacobs

production designer Tess Ellis  
storyboard, drawing René Piersma  
optical illusion Myrna Versteeg  
choreographer Geert van de Wetering  
director making-of

for Jaunt VR  
general manager, EMEA Dominic Collins  
special projects Michiel Frackers

with the support from the Dutch Cultural Media Fund  
and the Netherlands Film Fund

© 2017 - SUBMARINE CHANNEL

