Virtual Reality production company Vrse.works and the United Nations present ‘My Mother’s Wing’ a virtual experience about life in Gaza

Virtual Reality production company Vrse.works presents ‘My Mother’s Wing’ about life in Gaza, the third in their series of virtual reality experiences with the United Nations to help fight donor fatigue on some of the world’s most pressing challenges, it is available and free to watch now on the Vrse app.

Many people in the Gaza Strip live their lives in the shadow of constant conflict. With no chance to leave, little opportunity at home, and weak control over their own affairs, many Palestinian families have built and rebuilt ordinary lives, far from politics and power. ‘My Mother’s Wing’ uses virtual reality to follow a mother who lost two young sons in a school shelled during the devastating 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict. Her loss is unthinkable, and yet she shows us how she channels her response to pain with resilience and tenderness.

‘My Mother’s Wing’ was created by UN Advisor Gabo Arora, Vrse.works creative, Ari Palitz, and creative director and executive producer, Chris Milk, it was produced by Samantha Storr and Patrick Milling Smith. The VR short was commissioned as part of the UN’s advocacy at the World Economic Forum in Davos to state and business leaders, offering a unique perspective into the challenges and heartbreak of living on the Gaza strip.

“At the UN, we consistently strive to bring citizens’ perspectives into the decision making process anyway possible” said Gabo Arora, Senior advisor at the UN. “By leveraging breakthrough technologies, such as virtual reality, we can create solidarity with those who are normally excluded and overlooked, amplifying their voices and explaining their situations.”

Exploring the cycle of Israeli / Palestinian violence through the lens of a single family, ‘My Mother’s Wing’ shows how mothers spread love and support even in the most difficult circumstances. Through this, they are the architects of a peace and stability in a society that has deprived them of it.

‘My Mother’s Wing’ is the third film shot in virtual reality for the UN, who is using the medium to generate greater empathy and new perspectives on people living in conditions of great vulnerability. The first film ‘Clouds Over Sidra’, which launched at Davos last year, was received to great acclaim, and follows a twelve year old in the Za’atari camp in Jordan - home to 84,000 Syrian refugees. The second in the Vrse.works UN series is called ‘Waves of Grace’, and follows a young Liberian woman’s struggle to thrive during and after an Ebola epidemic.

“We are very proud to be releasing ‘My Mother’s Wing’, our third VR experience made in collaboration with the UN”, says Vrse.works co-founder, Patrick Milling Smith. “On the surface, My Mother’s Wing is about a woman coping with the loss of her two children after an Israeli air strike bombed a UN school. She attends support groups, spends more time with her remaining children, and frets over their psychological fragility. Beneath the surface, however, it is about
identifying the factors that contribute to cycles of violence, and how to disrupt them. The mission of our VR series with the UN is to create awareness and empathy for these situations and events. The films have been seen in over 40 countries and translated into 15 languages and has helped raise billions in direct support and funding. Shooting this film in Gaza feels like a watershed moment in VR. Giving people access to one of the most cut off, polarizing and politized places in the world is important. Our hope is that this film can also be about healing and hope. A mother’s story is universal.”

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MY MOTHER’S WING is available to watch on the Vrse app www.vrse.com
(Apple iTunes, Google Play store and Oculus Gear VR store)
www.vrse.works | www.vrse.com

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NOTES TO EDITORS

My Mother’s Wing | credit
Created by: Gabo Arora + Ari Palitz
Produced by: Samantha Storr + Patrick Milling Smith
Creative Director/Executive Producer: Chris Milk
Producers: Chris Fabian + Kristin Gutekunst
Director of Photography: Barry Pousman
Music by: McKenzie Stubbert
Edited by: Jeff Tober

About Vrse.works
Vrse.works is a specialized and focused production company that supports the world’s leading creative innovators in Virtual Reality spherical filmmaking. The Vrse.works collective of artists, technicians, thinkers, and innovators strive to create the world’s best experiential media and utilize custom built tools and technology to craft and curate original immersive experiences.

Vrse.works creative team and production talent are industry leaders in short-form commercials, music videos, feature film, theatre, design, photography and fine arts with a proven track
record in creating stories that inspire and truly resonate, collectively earning them numerous Emmys, Cannes Lions, Grand Prixes, Palm d’Ors, AICP, D&AD, One Show, ADC, Tony, Webby Awards and a Grammy.

Other Vrse.works experiences: Vrse.works has produced a number of Virtual Reality Experiences including “Evolution of Verse”, “Vice News VR” and the UN documentaries ‘Clouds Over Sidra’ and ‘Waves of Grace’. Vrse.works documented SNL’s 40th Anniversary Special in VR and partnered with the New York Times to capture the birth of a new large-scale street art installation called “Walking New York”. Vrse.works most recently created a revolutionary new visual interpretation of U2’s “Song for Someone” that takes singers around the world and joins them together in a reimagining of the music video. These experiences are currently available on the Vrse app, which can be downloaded at Apple iTunes, Google Play store and Oculus Gear Store.

About Vrse
Founded in 2014 by lauded director Chris Milk, and visionary technologist Aaron Koblin, Vrse is developing advanced technology for telling stories in immersive media and houses a curated collection of the highest quality cinematic, story-driven content available today in virtual reality. Vrse’s platform is available across all major VR headsets. Vrse is available on iPhone iOS and Android Mobile with or without Google cardboard (https://www.google.com/get/cardboard/) by downloading the Vrse app (http://vrse.com/); or on Samsung phones with the Samsung Gear VR (http://www.samsung.com/global/microsite/gearvr/). Content can also be viewed through the Vrse 360-degree desktop player (www.vrse.com).

About Samantha Storr
Samantha Storr is an Executive Producer at Vrse.works, based in Los Angeles. In her 2+ years at Vrse.works, Samantha helped build the infrastructure necessary to carry this exciting technology out of its infancy.

Leading a team of highly creative minds, Samantha has been at the forefront of all of Vrse.works’ pioneering projects, most notably Evolution of Verse, Clouds Over Sidra, Walking New York, The Millions March, Catatonic, Waves of Grace, U2’s Song For Someone & The Displaced. With many new projects in pre-production and in the pipeline, Samantha and her team are beyond excited about the future of VR storytelling.

Prior to joining Vrse.works, Samantha spent 15+ years bringing creative visions to life across nearly every media platform. As a Producer, she has worked alongside Robert Redford, Terry Gilliam, Spike Jonze, Beastie Boys, and countless others, lending her unique perspective and expertise to all forms of narrative. Her 12+ year collaborations with Chris Milk resulted in the world’s first virtual reality film experience: Beck’s Hello Again, sponsored by Lincoln.

In addition to serving as Executive Producer at Vrse.works, Samantha also runs Vrse.farm, a specialized adjunct focused on expanding the lexicon of creative storytelling in VR. She also
serves as an advisor to Vrse, Inc, the distribution platform of Vrse. At present, Samantha is busy paving the road for the future of VR.

About Chris Milk
Beginning his career in music videos and photography, Chris Milk’s work has expanded beyond the traditional: his art straddles experimental genres and unfamiliar mediums, turning new technologies, web browsers, ephemeral events and even physical gestures into new found canvases. His work continues to test the frontiers of interactive technology and art as Founder and CEO of Vrse, a virtual reality technology company, and Founder and Creative Director of Vrse.works, a virtual reality production company. Milk presented at TED in 2015 on the power of virtual reality as a medium to advance humanity.

Milk began his career creating music videos for Kanye West, Arcade Fire, Beck, Jack White, U2, Johnny Cash, Gnarls Barkley, and many more. Known for weaving artistic and technological innovations in pursuit of the new aesthetic, Milk’s acclaimed interactive projects include Wilderness Downtown (with Arcade Fire), The Johnny Cash Project, and The Treachery of Sanctuary. His interactive installation artworks have been showcased at the MoMA, the Tate Modern, and museums the world over. He has been honored with the Grand Prix Cannes Lions, The D&AD Black Pencil, The Grand Clio, and SXSW's 'Best of Show' alongside multiple Grammy nominations, MTV Moon Men, and the UK MVA Innovation Award. Milk’s recent virtual reality projects include the acclaimed Evolution of Verse, Waves of Grace (made in partnership with The United Nations), Walking New York (made in partnership with artist JR and The New York Times), and Song for Someone (a music experience made in partnership with U2 and Apple Music).

About Patrick Milling Smith
Patrick Milling Smith is a film, theatre, commercial and music video producer who co-founded international production company SMUGGLER alongside Brian Carmody. Since its inception, SMUGGLER has twice taken home the coveted Cannes Lions Palme d'Or as well as the Cannes Lions Grand Prix, AICP Awards, Tony's, Olivier's, the Emmy, the Grammy and D&AD Pencils. SMUGGLER has also been recognized as Production Company of the Year several times by the Clio Awards, British Arrows, and Creativity Magazine.

Amongst Patrick’s most recent theatre productions is the Broadway adaptation of the Oscar-winning musical Once, which garnered 8 Tony Awards including Best Musical along with the Grammy for Best Musical Theatre Album. In addition to touring the US, Once recently ran in Toronto, Korea and London’s West End where it was nominated for six Olivier Awards including Best Musical and went on to win two. In 2014 Patrick founded Vrse.works with filmmaker and digital artist Chris Milk and Producer Brian Carmody.