The Sixth Edition of MUTEK Forum – Spotlight on XR
From September 8 to 11, 2020, online and in Montréal

Tuesday, July 14, 2020 – From Tuesday, September 8 to Friday, September 11, 2020, the sixth edition of MUTEK Forum, formerly known as Forum IMG, will once again provide a shared platform for artists, companies, researchers and other industry players to explore the latest in practices and tools for digital creation, to generate new business opportunities, and together, to imagine our digital futures.

Due to the events of the past few months, human connections have taken on greater importance, and calls have grown louder for values such as equality, inclusion, and diversity to play their rightful roles in our societies’ collective consciousness and actions. Given this situation, MUTEK Forum will continue to further its mandate of bolstering artistic creation that brings us together and inspires us, contributing to the development of cultural industries and the arts, and encouraging reflection on the ethical and political issues inherent to technology and the digital world.

More than ever, the Forum has positioned itself as a market of minds that fosters deep connections between members of its local milieu, as well as with a broader international scene. The event will take on a hybrid format that combines a physical experience for Montréalers with a virtual one for speakers and audiences around the world. In this way, every participant will find themselves gathered in a virtual professional environment where they will make their way between conferences, workshops, and networking activities, all while developing connections in a free, immediate fashion.

The first Forum theme to be revealed covers virtual, augmented, and mixed realities—commonly known under the umbrella term of extended reality or XR—which are a set of immersive technologies now recognized as essential, ubiquitous parts of today’s cultural industries.

The sixth edition of the XR Salon – presented by Unreal Engine
MUTEK has been developing its XR Salon since 2015, and each year provides a selection of the latest creative and technological advances in XR, while simultaneously examining a variety of industry-specific issues. For the second consecutive year, the XR Salon will be presented by Unreal Engine, a leader in game engines and a critical partner to creators of real-time digital content.

Among the creative projects presented: Frances Adair Mckenzie’s The Orchid and the Bee experience, produced by the National Film Board of Canada, which combines virtual reality with stop-motion; and a case study about the creative practices of Montreal studio Dpt., which integrate augmented reality and artificial intelligence.

Industry issues addressed will include the challenges related to distribution and publishing that have been made more acute by the situation of the last few months, and will be examined by Atlas V, a multi-award-winning French production company and distributor, and Ryot, a major U.S. player in the production of innovative immersive content; in addition to virtual production, which has been propelled to prominence thanks to the opportunities provided by technologies such as volumetric capture, as exemplified by the American companies Metastage, who are 3D-hologram experts and the first American partner of Microsoft’s capture system, and Scatter, whose product, Depthkit, is among the most used by independent creators.

Lastly, XR Salon welcomes Savannah Niles, a multidisciplinary designer, technologist and strategist, whose journey has included time at MIT, Walt Disney Imagineering, and Twitter before she made her way to American mixed-reality start-up Magic Leap, where she is currently in charge of collaboration and copresence platforms. Her presentation on the potential of mixed and augmented reality in culture, and all spheres of life, will serve as an introduction to beginners and inspiration to seasoned veterans.
Mixed-reality storytelling: Montréal/Miami New Narratives Lab

The Forum will continue to explore augmented and mixed reality via the activities held by Montréal/Miami New Narratives Lab, which were recently launched by FilmGate Miami, MUTEK, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and O Cinema.

To identify some of the creative and technological issues related to the medium, experienced local institutions and creators Headspace Studio and Thinkwell Studio Montréal, as well as international ones, such as Knight Foundation, Espii Studios, The Mill and artists Lisa Moren and Klasien van de Zandschulp, will discuss narrative-related topics, such as urban life, sound and human interactions. There will also be a case study on Breathe, a project presented at the 2020 Sundance festival and co-produced by the Phi Centre. In addition to the conferences, the physical workshops presented in Montréal by the NFB and in Miami by FilmGate will provide participants with the chance to try out different helmets and equipment.

Diversifying the applications of mixed reality

Whether it’s through mobile applications or the use of specialized headsets, mixed reality offers every artistic discipline—from the digital and visual arts to theatre, music, literature and architecture—tremendous creative potential, in addition to new content-distribution channels, and the opportunity to take advantage of innovative new business models.

To help creators navigate these technological changes, and thanks to support from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, the Forum will present a series of conversations revealing the full potential of mixed reality in the visual-art and book sectors, as well as its benefits for cultural institutions and events—with the participation of Anteism Books, Dundurn Press, Albedo Informatics and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, as well as Sheffield Doc/Fest – Alternate Realities.

Confirmed speakers and moderators – XR contents


Main partners of MUTEK Forum
All partners of MUTEK Forum – XR contents
Québec Government, Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, Secrétariat à la région métropolitaine du gouvernement du Québec, ministère du Tourisme du Québec, ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, Canada Council for the Arts, Conseil des arts de Montréal, City of Montréal, FACTOR and Canada’s Private Radio Broadcasters, Department of Canadian Heritage, Musicaction, British Council, Consulat général de France à Québec, Unreal Engine, Tourisme Montréal, National Film Board of Canada, Thinkwell Studio Montréal, FilmGate Miami, O Cinema, Kaleidoscope