

MIT Museum Presents North American Premiere of Groundbreaking Virtual Reality Experience “The Enemy” By Visiting Artist Karim Ben Khelifa

October 5 – December 31, 2017

*A Virtual Reality Experience coproduced by
Camera lucida productions, France Télévisions,
the National Film Board of Canada, Dpt. and Emissive*

Cambridge, MA, July 25, 2017 – [The MIT Museum](#) will present the North American premiere of [The Enemy](#), a groundbreaking interactive Virtual Reality (VR) exhibition and immersive experience, from October 5 – December 31, 2017. Conceived by acclaimed photojournalist Karim Ben Khelifa and further developed with MIT Professor D. Fox Harrell during a visiting artist residency hosted by [MIT’s Center for Art, Science & Technology \(CAST\)](#), the project immerses participants in discussions about violence and humanity by using pioneering VR technology to present interviews with soldiers on opposite sides of conflicts in Israel and Palestine, The Congo, and El Salvador.

Using virtual-reality headsets, exhibition participants will encounter real, 360-degree imaging and recordings of combatants on opposite sides of international conflicts who were interviewed by Ben Khelifa for the project. In their own words, the combatants offer personal perspectives on war, their motivations, suffering, freedom, and the future. Innovative technology developed at MIT will shape and adapt the VR-experience to each visitor, creating a unique and personalized experience that draws on answers given by museumgoers in a preliminary survey. Up to ten museumgoers can participate in *The Enemy* at once in an expansive and large gallery setting.

“MIT is a place for creative engagement between art, science, and technology. We are proud to present *The Enemy*, an exhibition that arises out of award-winning photojournalism combined with Virtual Reality technology. This exhibition stretches our senses as well as our emotional and moral imaginations, and we hope that it will help foster understanding in one of the places where it is most needed, namely in situations of human conflict,” said John Durant, The Mark R. Epstein (Class of 1963) Director of the MIT Museum.

“I hope the presentation of *The Enemy* at the MIT Museum creates a truly profound experience where the audience can rethink its notion of the Other,” says Karim Ben Khelifa. “I believe that walking within a VR space allows for tons of other emotions we cannot provoke in more conventional media, and it’s wonderful to have the opportunity to exhibit *The Enemy* here at MIT, which has been instrumental in the realization of the project.”

Originally conceived by Ben Khelifa as a photo exhibition, *The Enemy* evolved into a virtual-reality installation during his artist residency at MIT, beginning in 2013 at MIT’s Open Documentary Lab. Since then, Professor of Digital Media and AI D. Fox Harrell, founder and director of the MIT [Imagination, Computation and Expression Laboratory \(ICE Lab\)](#) has been Human-Computer Interaction Producer on the project. Harrell’s collaboration on *The Enemy*

introduced a dynamic model that responds to user behaviors, nervousness, and biases. This model alters the narrative by changing dialogue, experiences, and effects in the virtual world, and thus transforms the user's virtual identity. Together, Ben Khelifa and Harrell are incorporating concepts from artificial intelligence and cognitive science interaction models into the project, with the goal of using the VR experience of combatants' testimonies to engender understanding of "the Other." The personalized user experience and the survey that visitors complete before entering the exhibition were designed during the collaboration at MIT.

The Enemy is made possible through an international co-production beyond MIT, with the VR experience shaped in close collaboration with French partners Camera Lucida, France Télévisions Nouvelles Ecritures and Emissive, and smartphone application developed together with Canadian partners the National Film Board of Canada and Dpt. The smartphone application will launch in September 2017, expanding participation by people who cannot be at locations where the VR experience is offered in-person, with a focus on reaching the areas of conflict represented in the project.

Following its presentation at the MIT Museum, the National Film Board of Canada *The Enemy* will continue its North American tour in several Canadian cities including Montreal. The exhibition premiered at the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, France in May 2017 and traveled to The Tel Aviv International Student Film Festival in Israel in June 2017. The artist and his collaborators plan to present the exhibition in the conflict zones represented, so that younger generations can experience new perceptions of long-standing enemies.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

A series of public programs in conjunction with *The Enemy* will take place at the MIT Museum. All events are free and open to the public.

September 26 / 6:00 - 7:00 PM

The Enemy – From Concept to “Virtual” Reality

Description: Join MIT Media Lab professor Fox Harrell and acclaimed photojournalist Karim Ben Khelifa as they discuss the origins and development of “The Enemy”, a groundbreaking virtual reality exhibit exploring three international political conflicts. Learn about the origins of the project idea, the technical aspects of the exhibition and how it all came together.

October 3 / 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Empathy for Conflict Resolution

Description: Join MIT professor Ceasar McDowell for a salon-style conversation about interpersonal conflicts, using empathy to overcome tribalism, and creating human connections across lines of ideological division.

October 10 / 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Using Digital Tools to Explore American Political Divides

Description: Together with MIT professor Deb Roy, Director of the [Laboratory for Social Machines](#) and Chief Media Scientist at Twitter, explore ways to see past our differences and understand the humanity of the other side in order to bridge ideological gaps.

November 30 / 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Are We *The Enemy*?

Description: Together with Professor Emile Bruneau, Research Associate and Lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School for Communication, explore the neuroscience of the cognitive biases that drive human conflict and influence our relationships. And, learn about the psychological pathways available to aid us in transcending our trained and societally-programmed behaviors.

ABOUT KARIM BEN KHELIFA

Award-winning photojournalist Karim Ben Khelifa is widely known for his coverage of conflicts, including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where he covered the insurgent sides. For the past 15 years, Ben Khelifa has been on an increasingly ambitious quest, driven by the questions: What is the point of images of war if they don't change people's attitudes towards armed conflicts, violence, and the suffering they produce? What is the point if they don't change anyone's mind? What is the point if they don't help create peace? Ben Khelifa has worked in more than 80 countries and territories and has exhibited work on four continents, and has freelanced for *Time*, *Vanity Fair*, *Le Monde*, *Stern*, *The New York Times Magazine*, and dozens of other publications.

ABOUT D. FOX HARRELL, Ph.D.

D. Fox Harrell, Ph.D., is a tenured Professor of Digital Media and AI at MIT, in both the Comparative Media Studies/Writing Program and the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL) and Principal at Blues Identity Systems, LLC. Author of *Phantasmal Media: An Approach to Imagination, Computation, and Expression* (MIT Press, 2013), Harrell explores how computing can be used to create subjective experiences, cultural understandings, and critical empowerment—goals that are also resonant in *The Enemy*. Professor Harrell's work explores the relationship between imaginative cognition and computer science. His research involves developing new forms of interactive narrative, gaming, social media and other artificial intelligence-based digital media forms for creative expression, cultural analysis, and social empowerment. Harrell has been recipient of a National Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER Award, a Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) at Stanford University, and the Lenore Annenberg and Wallis Annenberg Fellowship in Communication.

COPRODUCERS

CAMERA LUCIDA is a documentaries and new media production company based in Paris. It gathers producers, authors and directors who share a passion for artistic and innovative creations. Its strategy is to push storytelling further and to produce an extensive range of formats, from interactive experiences and animation to Imax(R), 2D to s-3D. Camera Lucida has been experimenting with VR for more than four years, and is today one of the most renowned VR content production companies.

FRANCE TELEVISIONS Nouvelles Ecritures was established in 2011 and is the narrative research laboratory of France Televisions. This unit has co-produced and developed more than 170 web native programs exploring transmedia, interactive and linear ways to tell stories. "Nouvelles Ecritures" stands out as a laboratory, striving to open new fields of experimentation and innovation and invent original and different ways of telling stories about our fast-changing world.

THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD of CANADA is one of the world's great creative laboratories producing and distributing distinctive, relevant and innovative audiovisual productions. Its creators continue to break new ground in both the form and content of documentaries, animated films and multiplatform digital projects. www.onf.ca

DPT. is a digital creative studio founded in Montreal in 2007. They are a team of creative thinkers, designers, coders, producers and strategists who take an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to creating rich and unique interactive experiences that resonate with audiences.

EMISSIVE specializes in the creation of interactive and immersive experiences in a wide range of media. Emissive engages in new methods of narration using state-of-the-art visualization and virtual reality.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

The Enemy is supported by the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (CNC), Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA), The Canadian Media Fund, the TFI New Media Fund, the Ford Foundation, the Sundance Institute New Frontier Program, the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Arts' Doris Duke New Frontier Fellowship, and the Open Society Foundations. The project has been featured at the TriBeCa Film Festival.

ABOUT THE MIT MUSEUM

The MIT Museum's mission is to engage the wider community with MIT's science, technology, and other areas of scholarship in ways that will best serve the nation and the world in the 21st century. The Museum features two floors filled with ongoing and changing exhibitions, currently with an emphasis on robotics, photography and holography, MIT history, and current MIT research. The Museum presents a wide range of programs that appeal to audiences ranging from middle-school students to adults, including the annual Cambridge Science Festival in late April. For more information, visit mitmuseum.mit.edu.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ART, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

A major cross-school initiative, the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) creates new opportunities for art, science, and technology to thrive as interrelated, mutually informing modes of exploration, knowledge, and discovery. CAST's multidisciplinary platform presents performing and visual arts programs, supports research projects for artists working with science and engineering labs, and sponsors symposia, classes, workshops, design studios, lectures and publications. The Center is funded in part by a generous grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Evan Ziporyn is the Faculty Director and Leila W. Kinney is the Executive Director.

Since its inception in 2012, CAST has been the catalyst for nearly 150 artist residencies and collaborative projects with MIT faculty and students, including numerous cross-disciplinary courses, workshops, concert series, multimedia projects, lectures, and symposia. The visiting artists program is a cornerstone of CAST's activities, which encourages cross-fertilization among disciplines and intensive interaction with MIT's faculty and students.

ABOUT THE ARTS AT MIT

70 percent of incoming freshmen have prior training in the arts, and nearly 50 percent of all MIT undergraduates enroll in arts courses each year. The arts strengthen MIT's commitment to the aesthetic, human, and social dimensions of research and innovation. Artistic knowledge and creation exemplify MIT's motto—*mens et manus*, mind and hand. The arts are essential to MIT's mission to build a better society and meet the challenges of the 21st century. For more information, visit arts.mit.edu.

Visitor Information

The Enemy is presented at the MIT Museum

MIT Museum

265 Massachusetts Avenue

Central Square Cultural District

Cambridge, MA 02139 USA

Phone: 617-253-5927

<https://mitmuseum.mit.edu/>

Open daily 10 PM – 5 PM Open daily 10 AM– 6 PM July and August

Closed major holidays.

General admission to the Museum only: \$10.00 for adults; \$5.00 for youth under 18, students, seniors; free admission for MIT card holders and alumni. Discounts are listed online.

The Enemy is specially ticketed with timed entry. Cost \$10.00 per person. Discounts and other offers do not apply. See mitmuseum.mit.edu/enemy for hours, including specially scheduled Friday evenings.

Parking: Metered street parking and area lots

Public Transportation: Red Line "T" to Central Square or #1 bus

mitmuseum.mit.edu/enemy

www.theenemyishere.org

A coproduction

With the support of

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