

DOK Neuland Maps the Landscape of Collapse

Press Release
29.9.2026

The Industry programme DOK Exchange XR explores XR archival practices amid AI and tech advancements



Living in Water (Director: Ana P. Santos) | DOK Leipzig 2026

With a news cycle churning endlessly through conflicts, climate crises, and violence, our sense of stability is eroding. Held under the theme “Landslide”, DOK Neuland, the public extended reality (XR) and expanded filmmaking exhibition, maps collapse across eight compelling works, revealing its many facets, fractures, and promises. Curated by Dana Melaver, the works span a range of themes and narrative approaches, from man-made tensions with nature, to homes lost to climate change and violence, to departures from certainty and new beginnings. The lineup boasts diverse forms, featuring three VR/MR experiences, two 360° films, two mixed media installations, and a performance special event.

The public exhibition is accessible to visitors free of charge from 27 October to 1 November 2026 across several venues. While most works are on view at the main venue Kohlraßzirkus, two special programmes, DOK Neuland Presents, are featured on the ground floor of Leipzig’s Central Station and at Heilandskirche/Westkreuz.

Ana P. Santos, an award-winning journalist whose work typically centres on the intersections of gender, sexuality, and migrant rights, presents an immersive reportage, **“Living in Water”** (2025), exploring the intimate impacts of climate change. Set in Isla Tibaguin, Philippines, one of the world’s most climate-vulnerable countries, this 360°/VR experience documents life where flooding has become routine and floodwaters, brought in by tides, creep into homes almost daily.

Following Germany’s Murg river in the course of three years, the expanded documentary project **“Becoming River”** (2026) by Adrian Schwartz, Daniel Fetzner, and Ephraim Wegner captures a landscape where nature and human infrastructures inevitably intertwine. Impressions, featuring the river, construction sites, dams, and people, coalesce across projections, screens, sound, and live data interpretations.

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In a delicate exploration of what remains after calamity, the deeply affecting VR documentary **“The World Came Flooding In”** (2025) by Isobel Knowles and Van Sowerwine crafts a miniature world filled with lost objects and spaces, recreated based on testimonies of people affected by the 2022 floods in eastern Australia.

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Digital objects, too, are vulnerable to loss. In the installation **“Permanence of Decay”** (2026), multidisciplinary designer Pranav Chaparala challenges the supposed immortality of data, reimagining it as a fragile being with a finite lifespan. Through a physical console, the visitor actively engages with the system, composed of a photographic archive, deciding whether to slow the decay of images or accelerate their demise.

Meanwhile, **“The Room of a Thousand Voices”** (2026) by Cologne-based Cuban media artist Pavel Mendez Hernandez draws the visitor into a room that unfolds as a Cuban lived-in home over one accelerated day. Unleashing senses, memory, and imagination, this single-user Mixed Reality installation places the visitor (via a VR headset) into a darkened space where they move through a 1:1 physical room, while the virtual layer restores the house as it once was and the hands meet its materiality.

Keren Manor and Faiz Abu Rmeleh of Activestills, an independent photography collective “engaged in decolonial struggles in Palestine/Israel”, present **“We Shall Return”** (2026), co-produced by B’Tselem and the award-winning XR studio NowHere Media. Blending visceral 360° cinematography and phone and handycam footage filmed by Palestinian residents and activists, it is a disturbing documentation of forced displacement in the West Bank, centered on first-person accounts of Palestinians under constant pressure by Israeli forces and settlers.

This year’s DOK Neuland features two special programmes, **DOK Neuland Presents**. In **“Nothing to see here”** at Leipzig’s Central Station, the visitor journeys into the unexpected inside a secret world in a central train station. **“What if Hildegard von Bingen Was a Wellness Influencer”** at Heilandskirche/Westkreuz offers a singular experience, collapsing time and musical traditions, with two church organs, played by AI-driven robots, forming a duet and performing to a score composed live with the audience. This event will be held only twice, with prior registration required. Several special events are also set to take place, further contextualising the exhibited works, including musical activations of “Becoming River” and talks with DOK Neuland artists.

This year’s **DOK Exchange XR**, the Industry programme for interactive and immersive storytelling, focuses on shifting practices of archiving XR and immersive works amid AI and sweeping tech advancements. DOK Exchange XR (the XR Conference, XR Showcase, and XR Prototyping Zone) takes place on 29–30 October. It is preceded by a special programme on 28 October, **DOK Exchange XR Encounters**, a new format introduced this year in collaboration with Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig, which will discuss and showcase their immersive practice and work with archives. This year, DOK Exchange XR works closely with Saxony experts and game/XR studios, along with the British Council, the French Institute as part of Novembre Numérique, the Creative Europe Desk Berlin-Brandenburg, and other partners.

Also new in this edition is a **DOK Exchange XR Think Tank**, held as part of DOK Exchange XR’s continued partnership with CPH:DOX/LAB. The Think Tank “Digital Archives in Transition: From Current Practices to Cultural

Resilience in Audiovisual & Immersive Storytelling” explores current and emerging models for archiving XR, as well as a rising need for resilience in times of AI and rapid tech change.

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Alongside a full slate of panels and keynotes, this year's **XR Conference** introduces a masterclass format, dedicated to advancing the conversation around archiving and preserving complex XR and hybrid works. Joanna Kaliszewska, a digital archivist at Poland's National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute (FINA), holds a masterclass on digital preservation and the role of archives in safeguarding our audiovisual memory. Among other highlights is the panel “Living Archives: Preserving (Extended) Realities in the Age of AI”, moderated by artist and XR industry expert Sara Francesca Tirelli.

The **XR Showcase** features four projects. In a collective brainstorming session, involving a panel of experts from across research, funding, production, distribution, art, and technology, the creators have the opportunity to exchange perspectives on their projects and co-develop solutions.

A total of four prototypes are presented at this year's **XR Prototyping Zone**, where experts, distributors, and industry professionals test the works-in-progress in regards to interactive elements, narrative solutions, and user interaction. As DOK Exchange XR looks ahead to ambitious new forms of immersive storytelling between XR, games, XR, and AI, this year's prototypes also bring forward experimental forms, including an interactive narrative using EEG devices and a 2D interactive game drawing on traditional animation techniques.

Extending this year's archival focus, the **DOK Industry Podcast** has released a fresh episode, “Bringing Archives to Life Through Immersive Storytelling”, which brings in Chloé Lee and Lucy Hammond whose works were first pitched at the DOK Exchange XR Showcase and have since grown into internationally recognised works, “Inter(mediate) Spaces” and “Öl (Haunts)”, respectively. The creators join host Weronika Lewandowska (curator and coordinator of DOK Exchange XR) in tracing their projects' journeys and discussing their creative methodologies and challenges of working with archives in XR.

DOK Exchange XR is supported by the Creative Europe Desk Berlin-Brandenburg, the British Council, and the French Institute as part of Novembre Numérique. Among the programme partners are Kunstkraftwerk Leipzig, National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute (FINA), Games & XR Mitteldeutschland, MOIN Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, NewImages and CPH:DOX/LAB.

The panel “Beyond the Downturn: New Paths for Games & XR in Europe” takes place in partnership with Games und XR Mitteldeutschland. The masterclass “Budgeting and Business Planning for XR Productions” is held in partnership with MOIN Film Fund Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein.

DOK Neuland came to life again through the support of Sächsische Medienanstalt (SLM), Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung and MDR Media. The Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands supports the work „Nothing to see here“.

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**Pressemitteilung
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DOK Leipzig would like to thank [all supporters of the festival](#).

Images for download: [Film stills](#)

The XR works at DOK Neuland can be found in the following film list.

DOK Neuland



Becoming River

Adrian Schwartz, Daniel Fetzner, Ephraim Wegner
Germany, France 2026 | 150 min
No Premiere

Drei Jahre umfassend dokumentierte Forschungsarbeit zum Fluss Murg, Nordschwarzwald. Die Ergebnisse vermittelt das Projekt über Bildschirme, Projektionen, Ton und Live-Dateninterpretationen. – *Three years of extensively documented research on the Murg river, northern Black Forest. The project expresses the results across screens, projections, sound, and live data interpretations.*

Language German
Subtitles German, English



Living in Water

Ana P. Santos
Philippines 2025 | 15 min
German premiere

Kochen, lesen, schlafen – alles knietief im Wasser. Eine eindringliche Reportage zum Alltag auf der Isla Tibaguin, Philippinen, wo Überschwemmungen zur Normalität geworden sind. – *Cooking, reading, sleeping, all thigh deep in water. An immersive reportage on daily life in Isla Tibaguin, Philippines, where flooding has become routine in the last years.*

Language Filipino, English
Subtitles None



Nothing to see here

Celine Daemen, Aron Fels
Netherlands 2025 | 10 min
German premiere

Im Hauptbahnhof verbirgt sich eine geheime Welt, die unserer eigenen unheimlich ähnlich ist, und dann doch so anders. Ein Exkurs ins Unerwartete, der unsere Realität ins Wanken bringt. – *There is a secret world in the central train station, one eerily like our own and ever so slightly off. An excursion into the unexpected that calls reality into question.*

Language English
Subtitles None



Permanence of Decay

Pranav Chaparala
USA 2026 | 15 min
European premiere

Alles muss einmal ein Ende finden – auch Digitales bleiben vom Vergehen auf dieser Welt nicht verschont. Doch gewinnen die Bilder nicht gerade in dieser Vergänglichkeit umso mehr an Wert? – *Everything in this world must come to an end and objects, digital included, are not exempt from demise. But is it not in their mortality that images become all the more precious?*

Language
Subtitles None

DOK Neuland



The Room of a Thousand Voices

Pavel Méndez
Germany 2026 | 20 min
World premiere

Ein Raum, der sich als kubanischer Haushalt entfaltet – und als Portal durch Zeit und Generationen. In der Dunkelheit, zwischen physischer und virtueller Realität, erwachen die Erinnerungen. – *A room that unfolds as a Cuban household – and as a portal across time and generations. In the darkness, between virtual and physical reality, memories awaken and imagination runs wild.*

Language Spanish
Subtitles

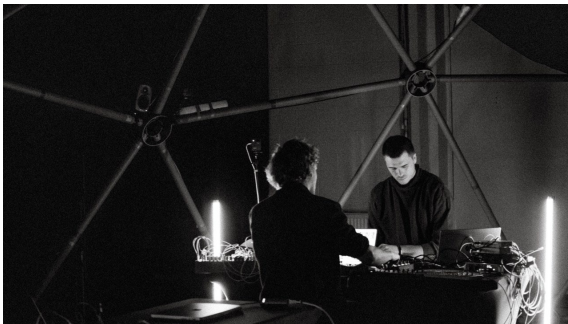


We Shall Return

Keren Manor, Faiz Abu Rmeleh
Germany, Palestine 2026 | 24 min
German premiere

Eine erschütternde Dokumentation von Vertreibungen im Westjordanland. Berichte von Palästinenser*innen, die unter ständigem Druck durch israelische Streitkräfte und Siedler*innen stehen. – *A disturbing documentation of forced displacement in the West Bank, centered on first-person accounts of Palestinians under constant pressure by Israeli forces and settlers.*

Language English
Subtitles



What if Hildegard von Bingen was a Wellness Influencer

Hauptmeier | Recker
Germany 2026 | 180 min
World premiere

Ein Duett für zwei Kirchenorgeln, gespielt von KI-betriebenen Robotern, und eine Live-Komposition mit dem Publikum. Zeit und musikalische Traditionen werden für dieses Klangerlebnis verworfen. – *A duet for two church organs, played by AI-driven robots, and a score composed live with the audience. A unique experience that collapses time and musical traditions.*

Language
Subtitles German, English



The World Came Flooding In

Isobel Knowles, Van Sowerwine
Australia 2025 | 25 min
No Premiere

Eine Miniaturwelt voller verlorener Gegenstände. Sie bilden die Lebensräume der Menschen nach, die 2022 von Überschwemmungen in Australien betroffen waren. Sensibel gestaltet, zutiefst bewegend. – *A miniature world filled with lost objects, recreating spaces of people affected by the 2022 floods in eastern Australia. A beautiful and deeply moving piece crafted with care.*

Language English
Subtitles French, English

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Thank you for your support

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