

El 48 A Disruptive Virtual Reality Experience Gives Vivid New Life to Crucial History

El 48, an interactive VR experience, recreates the moment Costa Rica's President, José Figueres Ferrer struck the wall of the Cuartel Bellavista.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, December 1, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Spark Media has just unveiled [El 48](#), a museum experience like no other. In an event billed as “una experiencia para revivir la historia” (an experience to relive history) Costa Rican museum-goers are taking their first-ever leap into a fully immersive, 360 virtual reality experience. Using state-of-the-art Oculus Quest 2 head-mounted displays, viewers can interactively navigate simulated environments where they freely peruse and virtually move toward a dramatic historical climax, crafting their own unique experience along the way. With realistic character animations and game mechanics, users are transported across seven decades to a mid 20th-century present that finds President José Figueres Ferrer moments away from his fateful sledgehammer strike on the stone walls of the country's largest military fortress.

Spark's virtual reality exhibit is a first in Costa Rica, making El 48 a historical event in its own right. El 48 premieres December 1st at the National Museum, formerly known as the Cuartel Bellavista. The VR experience is the brainchild of Andrea Kalin, founder and creative director of Spark Media. In 2016 Kalin wrote, produced, and directed the award-winning feature documentary, *First Lady of the Revolution*, the remarkable story of Henrietta Boggs, a young Southern woman who fell in love with a foreign land and the man destined to transform its identity. Her marriage to Jose 'Don Pepe' Figueres Ferrer in 1941 led to a decade-long journey through activism, exile, political upheaval and, ultimately lasting progressive reforms.

Kalin describes the vision behind her latest project: "In El 48, Don Pepe's avatar turns to offer that famous hammer to the user and declares, 'It's your turn.' Our goal is to encourage more and more people to take their turn, to break down the walls that separate us. No other medium allows for such a visceral experience and conveys this transcendent story more richly to a new generation."

El 48 and *First Lady of the Revolution* Producer, James Mirabello adds:

"To understand that momentous event on December 1st 1948, we need to actually put ourselves in the moment. That is the true educational value of virtual reality"

El 48 is an international and historic project that has received the "Evento Esencial Costa Rica" seal of approval from the Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promotion Agency. The goal of this

groundbreaking VR experience is to broaden project participation to international festivals, interactive virtual reality meetings, educational settings and, of course, virtual social spaces where everyone can experience and be inspired.

Exhibiting in virtual reality: A timely first for Costa Rica

El 48 will be the first VR exhibit in any Costa Rican museum, and the first anywhere that explores one of the most impactful moments in the country's history which continues to inspire the world.

Rocio Fernandez, the General Director of the country's National Museum explains "Offering innovative educational experiences is always a challenge for museums. EL 48 is an innovative way to appreciate one of the most significant historic events in the democratic history of Latin America."

In COVID times, safety of the experience is paramount. The Oculus Quest VR equipment will be sterilized by a UV-light disinfection chamber, newly designed by Plasma Innova for decontaminating N95 masks. The UV-light chamber deeply and quickly disinfects without using chemicals, damaging surfaces or affecting electronic components.

A fusion of U.S. and Costa Rican talent

Spark Media produced El 48 in association with the Costa Rican studio UXR Tech and prominent Costa Rican journalist Glenda Umaña, assembling a leading-edge production team that combined VR and 360 technology with artistry and narrative filmmaking.

Reinaldo Venegas, general manager of UXR Tech shares that, "El 48 represents a new standard. It has been an honor for my team to contribute 100% Costa Rican talent in the creation, production and logistics."

Umaña highlights that "When Andrea Kalin asked me to be part of this extraordinary project, I was really excited. It is an innovative and intimate way for all generations, both in our country and abroad, to experience that dramatic moment when the army was abolished."

"All are invited to enjoy the journey." Kalin concludes, "Now more than ever we need vision, tenacity and perseverance."

The El 48 experience is free and open to the general public at the National Museum of Costa Rica this December and in January 2021. In Spring 2021, it will tour internationally and will be made available on a broad spectrum of VR and 360 video platforms.

About Spark Media

Andrea Kalin is an accomplished filmmaker, creative thinker, digital innovator and founder of Spark Media, an award-winning production company that specializes in producing documentaries and digital media projects that impact social change. Under Kalin's helm, Spark Media has garnered over 100 industry awards for its productions, including a Prime Time Emmy and Golden Globe and WGA nominations. Spark's seasoned team has developed educational

games, mobile apps, interactive websites, and has recently received a series of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop Search for Harmony, an educational game fusing history, classical music composition and forgotten musical prodigies of color.

Spark Media's documentary, First Lady of the Revolution, the inspiration for El 48, was broadcast as part of PBS' Reel South series and aired on PBS' World Channel. Each month PBS reaches nearly 100 million people through television and nearly 33 million online. The documentary also enjoyed a theatrical run on commercial screens in Costa Rica and Mexico. The film garnered ten documentary awards on the film festival circuit including Best Documentary and Audience Choice awards. First Lady of the Revolution, is also the centerpiece of a groundbreaking agreement among Spark Media, the Costa Rican Ministry of Culture and the Centro de Cine, allowing the film to be enjoyed at embassies and consulates around the world to celebrate the abolishment of Costa Rica's standing army. To date, the film has been screened over 25 times in 22 different countries and has been translated into 10 languages.

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