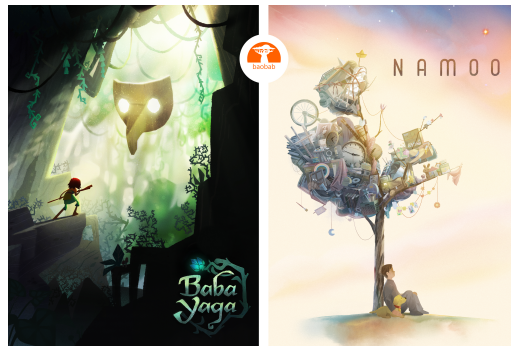


From Quest to Quill: Pushing the Boundaries of VR Storytelling in Baobab's Baba Yaga and Namoo

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ABSTRACT

In this session, the team behind the Immersive Best-in-Show winner (Bonfire) at Siggraph 2019 reveals creative and technical insights from their two recent award winning VR projects: Baba Yaga and Namoo.

Baba Yaga: Inspired by one of the most distinctive and well-known characters from Eastern European folklore, Baobab Studio's interactive VR story Baba Yaga re-imagines this ancient fairytale with themes of environmental conservation and female empowerment (the project features an all-female, diverse cast with Kate Winslet, Daisy Ridley, Jennifer Hudson, and Glenn Close). Baba Yaga is Baobab's most ambitious interactive experience to date, the culmination of all of its previous narrative experiments with AI intelligent characters, real-time responsive environments, emergent branching storytelling, all while pushing the boundaries of what it means to tell stories in immersive animation. The creative team will explore the following areas of innovation (and more) on this project: How do they make you, the audience, a main character where your choices really matter and have meaningful consequences. How did they create a fairytale universe that is fully interactive with real-time AI-driven characters and environments. How did they employ a theatrical art style for VR that combines theatrical lighting, stage-craft design elements, and a hand-crafted feel all running in real-time on a mobile headset. How did they layer spatialized

sound and music into our process to recreate the mythical world of Baba Yaga?

The Baba Yaga speakers are Eric Darnell, writer/director and co-founder of Baobab Studios, Nathaniel Dirksen, visual effects supervisor, Amy Tucker, lighting supervisor, Larry Cutler, executive producer, and Scot Stafford, Sound Supervisor.

Namoo: Namoo (meaning "tree" in Korean), is a narrative poem come to life as an animated VR experience entirely created with Oculus's VR animation tool "Quill." The project is led by esteemed Korean director Erick Oh (who won Ancey's Cristal Award for TV for The Dam Keeper Poems with Tonko House) in partnership with Baobab Studios. The entire piece takes place on a grassy knoll next to a seed that grows into a sapling and eventually a fully mature tree. This namoo might be interpreted as a kind of metaphor for the man's life, as it collects his meaningful memories in its branches – from pacifiers and stuffed animals to books, typewriters, and favorite scarves – to broken glasses and objects from times he'd rather soon forget. Namoo is a deeply personal yet surprisingly universal piece that will undoubtedly resonate with each viewer differently. The Namoo team will dive into all aspects of VR filmmaking to bring this visually rich film to life using Quill, from storyboarding to visual development to camera and staging to animation to optimizations for rendering on the Oculus Quest mobile headset.

The Namoo speakers are Erick Oh, writer/director, Anika Nagpal, production manager, Eusong Lee, art director, and Nick Ladd, lead quill artist.

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