

**16 - 18 September 2021**

## Press release

### **Gelsenkirchen becomes Germany's virtual reality "stronghold" again**

Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival: bringing VR makers together

**The third edition of Germany's largest festival for virtual reality (VR) is in the preparation. After 2018 and 2020, the Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival will once again attract the 2021, from 16 to 18 September, the national and international VR scene as well as technology enthusiasts will be technology enthusiasts to the heart of the Metropole Ruhr in Gelsenkirchen.**

Since 2018, the Ruhr region and Gelsenkirchen have been firmly anchored on the map for virtual reality in Germany. Since then, the Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival and its spin-off events have brought the industry together annually and gradually turned the city into the place for virtual reality. In 2021, the largest event for virtual reality in Germany will take place for the third time. From September 16th to 18th, the Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival will once again offer a professional audience and a general public the chance to marvel at the latest VR developments and try them. Start-ups, universities and established VR companies will be given a platform for presenting and networking that is unparalleled - and everything is free of charge.

As in the previous year, the main motive of the Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival 2021 is „Meaningful VR“. The focus is on virtual reality applications that will make a real difference to society in the future. After the hype surrounding various VR applications a few years ago, when many developments were solely concerned with the purely technical effect or an entertainment value, the question of sustainability of virtual reality is increasingly being asked. Which areas of VR can really be a useful extension of human abilities and other technologies?

Likewise, Places 2021 is increasingly pursuing its own sustainability strategy. The festival has a kind of avantgarde style, does not take place in an exclusive location or exhibition hall, is rather decentralised at unusual locations along the development quarter around the Bochumer Street in the city district of Gelsenkirchen-Ückendorf. The district has been developing into a lively place for art and culture in the past few years. IT start-ups and creative people are increasingly settling here. In the open spaces of Ückendorf, like vacant flats, shops or backyard halls, there are still a lot of possibilities in comparison to conditions in other cities. Companies from the VR sector can also settle here permanently and with favorable conditions. Places has been fuelling this founding spirit since its inception.

But the core of the Festival is once again the programme item „Experience \_ Places“. During the entire second and third day, the programme partners will be presenting their applications, which can be tested by the visitors free of charge. There will also be numerous lectures and workshops for the specialist audience. Depending on the Corona requirements in force in September, the Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival will be completely live on site or will partly take place in digital formats. A modified concept in compliance with all hygiene measures had already proved successful in 2020.

If you have any questions for your reporting or would like to arrange an interview, photo or filming session please feel free to contact our press officer Roman Milinski at any time on **0173 / 24 70 389** or [presse@places-festival.de](mailto:presse@places-festival.de).

## About Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival

The Places \_ VR Festival in Gelsenkirchen is Germany's largest event for Virtual Reality (VR) since 2018. Once a year, in the middle of the Ruhr metropolis, Europe's largest conurbation, everything revolves about innovations in the technologies VR, AR and MR. Not in a normal exhibition hall, but along an entire street. With its extraordinary urban locations along the Bochumer Straße, the development district Gelsenkirchen-Ückendorf turns into a festival stage. Between old buildings and modern facilities, between kerbside and backyards, in shops, art studios or vacant lots in need of renovation, XR developers meet the industry and its customers. Virtual meets real reality and shows what could be possible. The programme with its diverse elements - from experience stations to a university award, from a hackathon to an extensive programme of speakers - reaches a diverse audience.

The first Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival was attended by around 2000 people from all over Germany in April 2018. The second edition in August 2020 was already attended by twice as many. The Places \_ Virtual Reality Festival 2021 will take place from September 16th to 18th in Gelsenkirchen.

Places is a project of the Economic Development Department of the City of Gelsenkirchen within the framework of the „Networked City of Gelsenkirchen“, funded by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitalisation and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia as part of the digital model regions NRW. The conception and implementation is in the hands of the Gelsenkirchen-based mxr storytelling UG.

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