

artline  
films DV arte

PRESENT

THE

# REAL THING

VR

## REAL LIFE IN FAKE CITIES

A FILM BY  
**BENOIT FELICI**

DIRECTED BY  
**BENOIT FELICI**  
AND **MATHIAS CHELEBOURG**



PRODUCED BY **BENJAMIN LANDSBERGER**  
VR SUPERVISOR **GUILAUME MALICHIER** EDITING **MICHEL BLUSTEIN** CINEMATOGRAPHER **JULIEN MALICHIER**  
SOUND **MICHELE TARANTOLA** MUSIC **PABLO PICO** SOUND EDITING AND VR MIX **GAËL NICOLAS**  
PRODUCTION MANAGER **THOMAS VILLEPOUX** POST-PRODUCTION MANAGER **FRANÇOIS KLEIN**  
PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR **LI XIAOBIN** GRIP **CASTOR** 3D ANIMATION **UNICORN PARIS**  
GRADING **SERGIO OCHOA JIMENEZ** GRAPHICS **FRANCESCO FIORETTO** COPRODUCED BY **ARTLINE FILMS**  
**OLIVIER MILLE, VICTOIRE BUFF / DVGROUP, JULIEN ABOU, ANTOINE CARDON**  
**ARTE FRANCE, GILLES FREISSINIER, MARIANNE LÉVY-LEBLOND, SASCHA HARTMANN**  
WITH SUPPORT FROM **CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA ET DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE**  
**NOUVELLES TECHNOLOGIES EN PRODUCTION, FONDS NOUVEAUX MÉDIAS**

[www.therealthing.film](http://www.therealthing.film)

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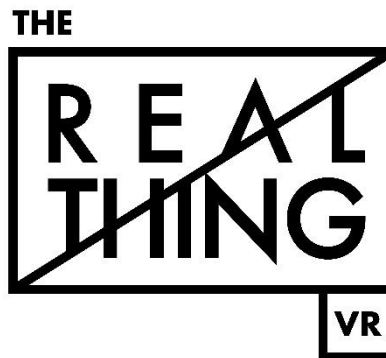
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FIRST PRESS SAMPLES FOR



"*The Real Thing* is a **charming film** set in the Chinese towns of Suzhou and Tianducheng, where replicas of famous European landmarks exist. The **surreal 360 journeys** through these towns are complemented by first-hand stories from people who live there, such as the photographer who muses on what it might be like to live in the "real" European city while photographing Chinese couples in their wedding attire."

*The Guardian*, Shehani Fernando

"There is such an **uncanny feeling** about these inhabited touristic attractions, as if modernity would eventually spare us the troubles of travelling by rebuilding foreign places at home. The film plays with its media to question the borders between true and false, real and virtual, playing with its technology **intelligently and without boastfulness.**"

*Les Cahiers du Cinéma*, Louis Séguin

"A **remarkable and overwhelming experience**, *The Real Thing* also sheds light on the paradox of live action VR: all seems so real that we are aware *not* to be there. Definitely a ***coup de coeur!***"

*CinémaTraqe*, Captain Jim

"*The Real Thing* proves to be the **perfect justification for the VR format** with its bizarre tour of synthetic Chinese cities that copy some of the world's most famous landmarks."

*UploadVR*, Jamie Feltham

p



A film by **Benoit Felici**

Directed by **Benoit Felici** and **Mathias Chelebourg**

Produced by **Artline Films**, **DVgroup**, and **ARTE France**

Documentary – France – 2018 – 16'

Original language: Chinese/Mandarin

Versions (subtitles): English, French, German

French title: ARCHIVRAI

Format: 4K for VR headsets, 360 audio / Original master: 8K

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

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THE REAL THING is a VR journey into a copy of our world, exploring real-life stories inside China's replicas of Paris, Venice and London.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

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THE REAL THING is a VR journey into a copy of our world.

Around China's largest cities, entire neighbourhoods have been inspired by foreign models. The film explores the most stunning of these "fake cities". It travels from Paris to London and Venice - without leaving China. The inhabitants guide us in the parallel world where they have chosen to live.

As VR leads the way to virtual tourism, copycat cities compete to offer a real experience of static travel. Walking the thin line between reality and virtuality, this documentary combines both to enhance a whole new feeling of ubiquity.



« While it once considered itself to be the center of the world, now China is making itself into the center that actually contains the world. »

Bianca Bosker, photographer and journalist

Sixty Eiffel towers, a dozen of Great Pyramids of Giza, thirty leaning towers of Pisa, over eighty copies of the White House...

### **Monumental copycats are multiplying all over the world.**

It had all started in "Fabulous Las Vegas". Rome, Egypt, Paris, Venice: casino owners offered visitors the illusion to travel the world without moving. Why go any further when the planet's landmarks are already on display?

### **Now Shanghai has taken the lead.**

China's second biggest city has been reproducing the world's favourite destinations for over two decades. Entire neighbourhoods have been inspired by European and American models. Surprisingly, inhabitants have chosen to live there, and not just for an overnight stay. **They make up a Chinese diaspora within China**, moving to London or Paris without leaving their home country.

These fake cities are the strangest utopia of our times. They draw the picture of a future without tourists, where borders would be closed and travel possible only through illusion.

THE REAL THING is an invitation to discover a parallel dimension, seemingly virtual, but absolutely real, and fake nonetheless...

The audience travels from Paris to London and Venice without leaving China. Paris Tiandu Cheng and its Eiffel Tower, Suzhou's London Tower Bridge, Hangzhou's Venice Water City: each stop is an opportunity to meet with the inhabitants and hear their stories from within.

Together, their voices uncover the meaning of these mesmerising replicas.

Why do they matter, what do they mean? Why does China keep building them? Are they heralds of a closed world? Or just new kinds of entertainment parks, selling life-long illusions?



## PRODUCTION NOTES

THE REAL THING is a bimedia production associating a 16-minute 360 film with a 54' /80' documentary, coproduced by ARTE France and 7 international broadcasters.

The 2D documentary encompasses 5 countries on 3 continents to expose the global phenomenon of architectural copycats. The 360 experience focuses on China's monumental copies. Both films are written and directed by Benoit Felici, with Mathias Chelebourg codirecting the VR piece.

THE REAL THING VR is a coproduction between independent documentary production company Artline Films, Franco-German broadcast ARTE, and Paris-based VR studio DVgroup. DVgroup and its subsidiary RIG are among France's major developers and innovators specialized in 360 technology.

The VR film offers an unprecedented insight into the fascinating “parallel world” of architectural copies. It exposes how some of the world’s most famous cultural landmarks have been “relocated” in a radically different environment, where real and fake blend into each other. Virtual tourism in virtual cities, yet in real places with real inhabitants... THE REAL THING fully combines VR cinema and documentary filmmaking to enhance the audience’s sensation of immersion.

Filmed on three main locations around Shanghai, the film has benefited from a unique technical setup with twin RED cameras, and high-resolution laser scanners for the 3D rendering of the architecture in the film’s opening sequence. It is among the very first documentaries to introduce 8K as a standard from filming to special effects, final postproduction, and mastering. Together with its 360 audio mix, the film’s stunning resolution – aiming at full compatibility with the next generation of VR headsets – makes these real places look even more surreal...



## CINEMATOGRAPHY

Benoit Felici, in his previous award-winning documentary "Unfinished Italy", had already explored a parallel world and revealed its strangeness. The remains of incomplete buildings and infrastructure, scattered throughout rural Italy, had turned into ruins. The blocks of concrete were marked by the passing of time, like antique remains of a failed civilisation.

Among them, some of the film's characters evolved as if they were the very last inhabitants of this "unfinished" world. Benoit Felici's filmmaking had turned a feature of Italian landscapes – with politics, the mafia and corruption in the background – into a universal story, that questions the inherent relation of architecture to time.

With its character-based storytelling, THE REAL THING combines the lightly humorous and reflexive points of view which Benoit Felici adopted in "Unfinished Italy". Rather than focus on architecture itself, he is intrigued by the ways architecture shapes us, the people living inside or around the architect's works.

Together with Mathias Chelebourg, Benoit Felici uses these places as "mirrors" – not of the original models, but of ourselves. By questioning them, he returns the questions to viewers.

Some might react with apprehension to new forms of aggressive relocation, applied this time not to companies and factories, but to whole cities and monuments. Others will find the replicas entertaining, as theme parks can be, yet wonder what their own life would be if transposed in the copy of another culture. All will be confronted to a form of visual shock: fakes do make the "global village" look real.

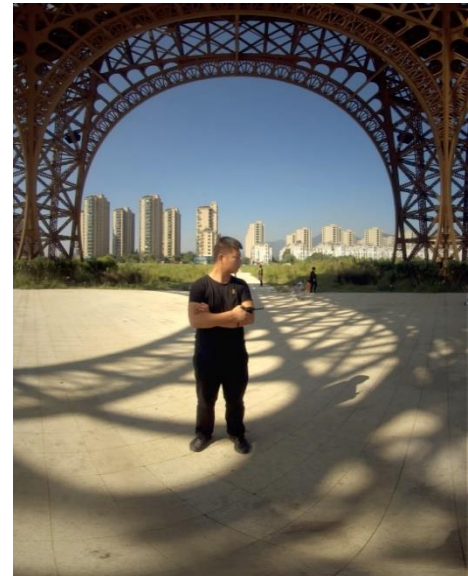
To convey these impressions, THE REAL THING involves its viewers in a game of perception. The cinematography, associating RED-camera shots with drone footage, enhances the details of the replicated cities and monuments to confront them to our visual memories of the "models". The editing interweaves opposites, as if real and fake were just two sides of the same coin. Close-ups of familiar styles and buildings, on the one hand, to wider and aerial shots revealing the surroundings and urban context, on the other hand.



# CHARACTERS

## The Warden | Paris Tianducheng (Hangzhou)

"I've watched Sky City grow, step by step. It has expanded rapidly. Far beyond imagination."

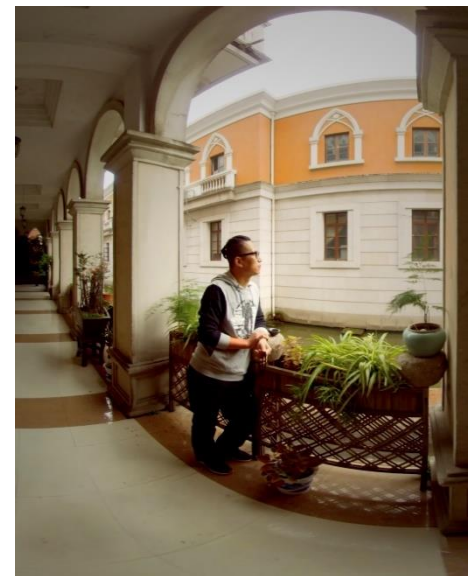


## The Restaurant owner | Paris Tianducheng (Hangzhou)

"Sky City is a kind of miniature Paris. It looks a lot like Paris. In Paris, France they probably don't know we exist. They have no idea about this twin city."

## The Antiques dealer | Venice Water City (Hangzhou)

"Why do people like the village of Venice? Why do they buy their homes here? Because they like exotic things. Beautiful things that are also very rare."



## The Photographer | London Tower Bridge (Suzhou)

"Most people call this the 'Mirror Bridge'. It looks like a famous bridge in London. Its Chinese name could also mean that it's a reflection of London's bridge."



## **Benoit FELICI**

Benoit is a French-Italian filmmaker graduated from the ZELIG film school in Italy.

His previous film "Unfinished Italy" was a journey into the remains of incomplete buildings and infrastructure, scattered throughout rural Italy, and which had turned into ruins. The film received 15 international awards (Documenta Madrid, Premiers Plans d'Angers) and was screened widely in the international film festivals circuit.

In THE REAL THING, Benoit follows the path that led him to "Unfinished Italy" and brings his reflection to a new focus: the world's architectural replicas, the reality of life in fake surroundings.

In 2013 Benoit Felici received the Foundation Lagardère's "Excellence Grant" as a documentary author.

### SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

#### THE REAL THING

Documentary, 54', ARTE France / Artline Films, 2018

#### THE REAL THING VR

Documentary, 15', ARTE France / Artline Films / DVgroup, 2018  
Co-directed by Mathias Chelebourg

#### PREMIER VOTE

Documentary, 26', France 3, 2017

#### GRÈCE, UNE VIE SANS VOIX

Short documentary, France-Greece, 2013

#### UNFINISHED ITALY

Documentary, 35', Italy, 2010

70 selections in festivals; main awards:

- Premiers plans d'Angers, 2011
- Best Italian documentary award at RIFF Roma, 2011
- Best short international documentary award, Documenta Madrid, 2011
- First prize at Les Écrans Documentaires, 2011
- Mention Spéciale CNC, Best Italian short film, 2011
- Best Italian documentary award at Festival Sedicicorto, 2011



## Mathias CHELEBOURG

From a young age, *Mathias Chelebourg* started working as a director for ambitious clients including **Prada, Dior, Hermes, Chanel, Nike, Microsoft, Renault and Venturi**. His music videos for French super stars **Matt Pokora** or **Yelle** attracted a dozen millions views online while *Variations*, his original art installation commissioned by *Premiere Heure Group*, successfully called attention to virtual reality at its infancy.

In 2017, at age 25 he co-directed "*The Real Thing*", a high-profile 8k VR documentary produced by Artline Films & DVGroup for ARTE that earned New Images **Grand Prix** when premiered in Paris.

The same year *Chelebourg* co-designed and directed **Alice: The VR Play**, an adaptation of *Lewis Carroll's* literary masterpiece, mixing live comedian motion capture and an array of physical interactions inside a VR room space. Showcased first at **Cannes Film Festival** It then premiered as an official selection of the *Venice Film Festival* and quickly earned the reputation **to be one of the most complete VR experiences to date** by elegantly blending the edge between live theater, CG animated film and theme park entertainment. The experience is still touring around the world and has been showed at the *Phi Center in Montreal*, *New York City's Future of Storytelling Summit* and the *Dubai International Film Festival*... Or *Geneva International Film Festival* where it received the **Best Digital Award**.

Following up on his passion for innovative formats *Chelebourg* recently collaborated with San Francisco based **Baobab Studios** to push the experimentation further and bring to life **Jack: Part One**, starring the voice of award winning **Lupita N'Yongo**. The 12' piece became the first ever live animated experience that breaks the boundaries between immersive theater, video gaming and animated narration by allowing the viewer to walk inside a story world sustained by a clever interactive stage design and live motion capture performance on a large scale. The experience premiered in New York at **Tribeca Film Festival** where it received the recognition of major industry leaders and the unanimous ovation from the public.

## Benjamin LANDSBERGER

Benjamin Landsberger has been working with Artline Films as a producer since 2003, primarily on international documentary coproductions on the arts, history and current affairs. He has co-authored several feature documentaries including "Clockwork Climate" (ARTE, distrib. PBS), "The Rise of the Gulf" (ARTE/2M, distrib. ZED), "The Black Sun of Hiroshima" (France 3/NHK, distrib. FTD).

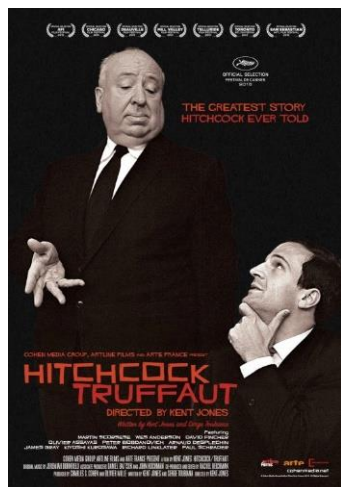
As delegate for a network of producers, he launched the first French-speaking online platform for non-fiction, FILM-DOCUMENTAIRE.FR. A former student of Sciences-Po Paris and the London School of Economics, Benjamin graduated in Political Philosophy (IEP of Paris).

## Olivier MILLE

Born in 1957, Olivier Mille is producer and film director. He obtained a PhD in Philosophy at the University of Paris-Sorbonne, and taught cinema studies and literature at the University of Basel (Switzerland) for 7 years. In 1986, he founded the production company Artline Films. Since then, he has worked as both a film director and film producer.

He has directed 20 documentaries and produced over 150 films in collaboration with major French and foreign broadcasters. He has been a member of several film commissions (CNC, Procirep) and president of the International Festival of Audiovisual Programmes (FIPA).

## RECENT PRODUCTIONS



**Sixty Eight** (4x52') Don Kent | Gebrueder Beetz Filmproduktion, Grifa Filmes, ARTE France, ZDF, NHK, Canal Curta!, RTS, Histoire, ORF, DR

**Hitchcock-Truffaut** (80') Kent Jones | ARTE France, Cohen Media Group, Ciné+ Official Selection, Cannes Film Festival 2015

**Snapshots of Russia** (4x26') Alexander Abaturov | ARTE France Official Selection, FIFA Montréal 2017

**DIY Country** (80', 55') Antony Butts | ARTE France Official Selection, Hot Docs 2016

**Hitler's Champions** (100') Jean-Christophe Rosé | France 3, Planète+, RTS, TV5Monde



**DV is an award-winning, independent, digital and VR innovation studio.** It constantly mixes different genres and formats to create new narratives for striking immersive experiences, in which interactivity participates in triggering a whole lot of intense and complex emotions for the audience.

Founded in 2011, DVgroup has assisted a great number of famous brands in their communication strategies. Its field of expertise covers as well digital campaigns (websites, mobile applications) as on-location installations (digital shop front, in-store displays, interactive tables, digital booths, interactive stage design...) DVgroup made an entrance into the VR market by strongly bonding with its partners, thanks to its technological expertise. In just a few years, the independent studio has participated in the creation of more than 150 films and it now has all the skills necessary to the whole production chain in-house, from writing to deployment.

Today the mission of the group is to accompany the transformations of the VR content industry: formats, jobs, stakes... everything is changing rapidly, and DVgroup has already started to surround itself with market-leader companies and is writing a new chapter of the communication and entertainment industry.



PHOTO BY MATHIAS CHELEBOURG



ARTE360-VR is the first European platform for immersive and interactive experiences of the European cultural network ARTE.

It is the first mobile broadcasting platform dedicated to the distribution of immersive, interactive, narrative cinema experiences in 360 degrees and Virtual Reality. The app ARTE360-VR is part of the ARTE brand, a French-German TV broadcast station that promotes programming in the areas of culture and the arts.

<https://sites.arte.tv/360/en>



# CREDITS

A film by  
Benoit Felici

Directed by  
Benoit Felici and Mathias Chelebourg

Produced by  
Benjamin Landsberger

VR supervisor  
Guillaume Malichier

Editing  
Michel Blustein

Cinematographer  
Julien Malichier

Sound  
Michele Tarantola

Music  
Pablo Pico

Sound editing and VR mix  
Spheric Environnement Sonore  
Gaël Nicolas

Production manager  
Thomas Villepoux

Post-production manager  
François Klein

Technical director  
Antoine Cardon

Production supervisor  
Li Xiaobin

Grip  
Castor

Mechanical engineer  
Bob Foresta

Second camera operator  
Bastian Esser

Data manager  
Maxime Beucher

Fixer  
Matthew McGill

3D animation  
Unicorn Paris

Grading  
Sergio Ochoa Jimenez

Stitching supervisor  
Guillaume Malichier

Stitching operators  
Déliya Levchenko Jérémy Zaloga

3D scan operator  
Mesures et systèmes Thomas Pauchard

Additional editing  
Jérémy Roux

Assistant editor  
Maëlle Henry

Graphics  
Francesco Fioretto

Art consultant  
Marie Jourdren

Production department  
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Judith Matheron Katya Panova  
Cécile Croizat

Coproduced by

Artline Films  
Olivier Mille  
Victoire Buff

DVgroup  
Thomas Villepoux  
Julien Abbou  
Antoine Cardon

ARTE France  
Direction du Développement numérique  
Gilles Freissinier  
Marianne Lévy-Leblond  
Sascha Hartmann  
Jérôme Vernet  
Stéphane Nauroy  
Lama Serhan, Florence Danon, Paul-Marie Couratin  
Rima Matta, Pauline Boyer / Françoise Lecarpentier

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PHOTOS BY BENOIT FELICI

