

ARTINFO

A Deadly Sleep Virus, Feminist WAR, and a Bewigged James Franco Take Over Sundance



Courtesy Flickr
Main Street in Park City Utah during the 2011 Sundance Film Festival

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Published: January 25, 2011



Courtesy Flickr
An installation view of Lance Weiler's "Pandemic 1.0"

PARK CITY, Utah— Where in Park City can you find cell phone-guided adventures filled with booby traps, a rotating cast of blond tenants in an epic standoff with their curmudgeonly landlord, revolutionary artist-feminists, and a fast-spreading and insidious sleep virus? (And why, for that matter, would you be looking for such a seemingly dangerous combo?) The **New Frontier** program at the 2011 edition of the **Sundance Film Festival**, that's where. The section of the venerable indie film offers installations,

multimedia performances, and otehr "transmedia experiences," and promises all of the above for your (quite safe) viewing pleasure. This year's New Frontier lineup began on Thursday and will run through January 30.

The non-competitive program — currently in its fifth year — is curated by Sundance festival senior programmer **Shari Frilot**, and takes place at both the historic **Miners Hospital** and the **Salt Lake Art Center**. "Mobile networks, electronic gadgets, wireless internet, and surveillance technologies now encrust our bodies, creating an electroskeleton that structures our modern lives, affecting our ethics and our decision making," Frilot wrote in a curatorial statement. "As this evolution intensifies, New Frontier at Sundance explores how storytelling and independent cinematic expression can exist at this forefront to compel audiences to engage with one another in ways that fortify our humanity."

How can the technology-encrusted audience expect to reinvigorate its humanity at this year's edition? Why, through works, executed in various techy mediums — many of them previously familiar from outings at the **Whitney**, the **Pompidou**, **Art Basel**, and sundry biennials — by **Blast Theory**, the **Bruce High Quality Foundation**, **Aaron Koblin and Chris Milk**, **OpenEnded Group** and **Bill T. Jones**, and — because you can't escape him, not ever — actor-turned-sort-of-artist **James Franco**.

For Blast Theory's "A Machine to See With" festival-goers will spend 75 minutes following directions received via cell phone, roaming the streets of the "underbelly of the city," taking part in a project that promises to riff on formulaic thrillers as well as the more refined legacy of **Jean-Luc Godard**. Also not to be missed: **Lynn Hershman Leeson**'s documentary, "I Women Art Revolution and RAW/WAR," which follows the WAR, the artist collective in the 1960s, in its battle against the ongoing exclusion of women from the art establishment's institutions, journals, and history books. And, of course, there's Franco's intextextual, self-referential, culture-mining interpretation of a beloved 1970s sitcom, titled "Three's Company: The Drama."

But certainly one of the most intriguing works on offer — sorry, Franco — is **Lance Weiler**'s "Pandemic 1.0," a kind of live-action video game enacted by festival visitors, who must battle a mysterious "sleep virus" that has struck inhabitants of a rural town. Incorporating a Twitter feed of those participants tracking down the disease and portraits of the "dead," the work allows visitors to complete tasks and revive victims with their cell phones. New Frontier is really quite the pioneering program, it seems — we're hoping that next year they'll be launching a necromancy app.