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FOUNDATION

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**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**

## **Virtual reality under the sea: ‘Valen’s Reef,’ a film by Conservation International, debuts at Cannes Lions with YouTube**

*Created in collaboration with Here Be Dragons and with support from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, the film transports viewers to Earth’s most stunning coral reefs*

**Cannes, France, and Arlington, Va. USA (June 20, 2016)** — Today, global NGO Conservation International debuts [“Valen’s Reef.”](#) an immersive and intimate virtual reality film set in the most biologically diverse reefs on the planet. YouTube is showcasing it as part of a curated selection of virtual reality films at the [YouTube Beach](#) at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity now through June 24. Viewers worldwide can dive into [“Valen’s Reef” exclusively on YouTube in 360-degrees and VR.](#) Starting Friday, June 24, the film also becomes available on the [Within app.](#) “Valen’s Reef” was created in partnership with leading virtual reality production company Here Be Dragons and Finch Company, and made possible with support from The Tiffany & Co. Foundation.

Filmed in the waters of eastern Indonesia’s Bird’s Head region, “Valen’s Reef” takes viewers to vibrant reefs where 600 types of corals — far more than the Caribbean — and 1,765 species of fish — more than the Great Barrier Reef — are thriving. This is the site of one of the most successful community-based ocean conservation programs in the world, the [Bird’s Head Seascape Initiative.](#) In the film, local fisherman-turned-scientist Ronald Mambrasar narrates an underwater journey in lyrical Indonesian, sharing with his young son Valen the story of how this initiative has helped the community reclaim and protect their ancestral waters.

“Our oceans are under severe threat but we know one method — community-based conservation — can and does make a measurable difference,” said Dr. M. Sanjayan, Conservation International’s Executive Vice President and Senior Scientist. “In ‘Valen’s Reef,’ we use the immersive power of virtual reality to transport you to the most biologically diverse sea on our planet, and one of the greatest conservation success stories of our time, to inspire love and support for our oceans.”

While coral reefs occupy just a sliver of the planet’s surface — 0.2% — they serve as habitat for more than 30% of fish in the ocean and generate at least \$375 billion annually through food,

shoreline protection and tourism. The Bird's Head, recently [identified as a 'bright spot' for coral reefs by the journal Nature](#), is faring better than most and is replete with iconic species like sharks, manta rays, whales and sea turtles. Its thriving waters are evidence of how conservation that works in tandem with communities can succeed in protecting our oceans.

"The ocean is a critical resource for all of the world's people, and yet many are still unaware of its plight," said Anisa Kamadoli Costa, chairman and president of The Tiffany & Co. Foundation. "Our Foundation is pleased to support 'Valen's Reef' and its story of coral conservation, as part of our ongoing efforts to preserve precious marine ecosystems."

"Virtual reality can transform the way we experience stories, teleporting viewers to distant places and cultures, as shown in 'Valen's Reef.' We're thrilled to include this stunning film in our Cannes Lions lineup, focused on innovation in virtual reality storytelling," said Jamie Byrne, Director, YouTube Creators.

In making "Valen's Reef," the team from Here Be Dragons and Conservation International braved strong currents to accompany Mambrasar as he monitored the reefs with Valen, age 8. It is Here Be Dragon's second underwater VR film and the crew used refined techniques to maximize the color and clarity of the image.

"Valen's Reef" is a powerful illustration of the creative potential for storytelling and impact in virtual reality," said Patrick Milling Smith, Co-Founder and President, Here Be Dragons. "The central character is the planet, the natural world around us. This is cinematic VR at its most arresting and visceral with an important and urgent environmental message to the world."

Additional support for the distribution of "Valen's Reef" was provided by longtime CI partner glassybaby through the glassybaby white light fund. VICE Media also provided support for distribution as part of their growing commitment to support sustainability initiatives. Conservation International is grateful to work in close partnership with the people of West Papua, the government of Indonesia, The Nature Conservancy, WWF and more than thirty other partners.

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**Assets for media use\*:**

[View and embed "Valen's Reef" on YouTube 360](#)

[Photos, maps, and graphics related to the Bird's Head region](#)

[Behind-the-scenes photos from the filming of "Valen's Reef"](#)

**About Conservation International**

Conservation International (CI) uses an innovative blend of science, policy and partnerships to

protect the nature people rely on for food, fresh water, and livelihoods. Founded in 1987, CI works in more than 30 countries on six continents to ensure a healthy, prosperous planet that supports us all. [Learn more about CI](#) and the "[Nature Is Speaking](#)" campaign, and follow CI's work on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#).

### **About the Bird's Head Seascape Initiative**

Since 2004, Conservation International has led an initiative with 30 international and local partners in the Bird's Head region of Indonesia to establish a network of twelve marine protected areas. Close collaboration between conservationists and the local community have allowed this network to foster one of the most successful marine conservation initiatives in the world, now a model of community-driven conservation. This twelve-year effort has been made possible through the primary support of the Walton Family Foundation along with a coalition of 70 contributors. Learn more about the Bird's Head region at <http://www.conservation.org/Birds-Head>.

### **About The Tiffany & Co. Foundation**

Established in 2000, The Tiffany & Co. Foundation provides grants in environmental conservation, working to preserve the world's most treasured landscapes and seascapes. The Foundation's programs promote responsible mining, healthy marine ecosystems and the enhancement of urban environments through strategic design improvements in new and existing parks. Learn more at <http://www.tiffanyandcofoundation.org>.

### **About Here Be Dragons**

Here Be Dragons is a leading specialized and focused production company that supports the world's leading creative innovators in Virtual Reality spherical filmmaking. The Here Be Dragons collective of artists, technicians, thinkers, and innovators strive to create the world's best experiential media and utilize custom built tools and technology to craft and curate original immersive experiences. The Here Be Dragons creative team and production talent are industry leaders in short-form commercials, music videos, feature film, theatre, design, photography and fine arts with a proven track record in creating stories that inspire and truly resonate, collectively earning them numerous Emmys, Cannes Lions, Grand Prixes, Palm d'Ors, AICP, D&AD, One Show, ADC, Tony, Webby Awards and a Grammy. Learn more at [dragons.org](http://dragons.org).

### **About Within**

Within is a leading VR company, whose mission is to tell extraordinary stories in virtual reality. Within uses custom built tools and their own VR app to create and distribute the most innovative, story driven experiences in VR today. Within was founded by director Chris Milk and technologist Aaron Koblin – both renowned for their innovative, industry leading work – and are best known for their high profile collaborations with The New York Times, the United Nations, Vice, Saturday Night

Live, and artists like U2. Within's goal is to push VR forward with groundbreaking experiences that explore and expand the medium's potential. As Chris said in his 2015 TED Talk, Within believes that virtual reality has the power to connect us in a profound way. Through virtual reality, we can become more compassionate, more empathetic, more connected and ultimately, more human.

It is the sister company to Here Be Dragons, which was founded by Milk and awardwinning producer Patrick Milling Smith, and produces all of Within's VR films, as well as bespoke VR experiences for corporate and nonprofit clients. Learn more at <http://with.in>.

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