



Press release

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Oscar-winning filmmaker Laura Poitras will open the VdR-Industry programme



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Visions du Réel has the privilege and honour to announce that U.S. filmmaker and journalist Laura Poitras will be the Special Guest at the opening of the 24th edition of VdR-Industry, the Festival's programme dedicated to industry professionals. Laura Poitras is notably the author of a post-9/11 trilogy, concluded by the Oscar-winning film *CITIZENFOUR*, a real-life international thriller about whistleblower Edward Snowden and global surveillance. Spanning more than two decades, Laura Poitras's cinematic work speaks to a strong political commitment and critical analysis of U.S. government systems of oppression and impunity, as well as the abuses of the so-called "war on terror". Her powerful films chronicle societal upheaval in real time. On Sunday 19 April, the Oscar and Venice Film Festival award-winning filmmaker will present a conversation, in collaboration with SRG SSR, while her most recent film *Cover-Up* also will screen as part of the official selection. This conversation will mark the official launch of the VdR-Industry days.

Laura Poitras directed her first feature film, *My Country, My Country* in 2006, which shines a light on the contradictions and disastrous consequences of the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Following this film, she was placed under surveillance by the United States Department of Homeland Security. Poitras' next film, *The Oath*, focuses on Guantánamo Bay and the so-called "war on terror." She continued her career with several short films and conducted in-depth research on mass surveillance and whistleblowers. In 2015, she won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature for *CITIZENFOUR*, which reveals Edward Snowden's initial disclosures. Part tense, closed-room drama, part paranoid thriller, this film documents the eight days spent with Edward Snowden in a Hong Kong hotel before he went into hiding. In the wake of this, Poitras presented *Risk*, a film about WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, at the Festival de Cannes.

Part of Laura Poitras' filmography falls within the portrait genre, such as *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*, for which she received the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. Accompanying photographer Nan Goldin as she takes on the Sackler family, owners of pharmaceutical company Purdue Pharma, whose flagship drug, Oxycontin, is at the root of the opioid overdose crisis in the United States, the film combines an archival portrait of the New York photographer with handheld footage of her civic actions. Poitras' latest film, *Cover-Up*, paints a portrait of American journalist Seymour Hersh, a leading figure in investigative journalism. It painstakingly weaves together interviews with a dense body of personal and media archives, retracing the major stories broken by the journalist, from the Mỹ Lai massacre during the Vietnam War, to the Watergate scandal, to the revelations of torture at Abu Ghraib during the Iraq War. The film screened as part of Venice Film Festival's 2025 edition.

"Laura Poitras has been able to shine a light on so many deeply moving, often unsettling and always timely issues of our times. She has done so with tact, sensitivity, artistry and a point of view that is unmistakably hers. Her work has been quintessential in shaping our shared understanding of the world, grounded in profound political awareness. She has not only moved the needle on what it means to be a politically engaged artist; her films continue to open windows into complex topics while inviting us into the intimate spaces she creates with those she chooses to portray. We are beyond thrilled to welcome Laura Poitras as our Special Guest and to open our VdR-Industry program with what we know will be a thoughtful, engaging and inspiring conversation.", stated Sabine Fayoux Cantillo, Head of Industry at Visions du Réel.

Laura Poitras' presence is part of the broader VdR-Industry programme, which will run from Sunday 19 to Wednesday 22 April 2026 as a core component of the Festival. This programme offers a variety of activities, including project presentations (pitching, works in progress), conferences and networking opportunities. Full details of the programme will be announced on 25 March 2026. The accreditation application form is available [here](#).

Biography

Laura Poitras has been awarded an Oscar and the Pulitzer Prize. Her most recent film, *Cover-Up*, premiered at the Venice Film Festival and was nominated for the BAFTA award.

Her film *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed* premiered at the Venice Film Festival, where it won the Golden Lion, becoming only the second non-fiction film in the festival's history to receive the top award. The film was also nominated for an Academy Award, won an Independent Spirit Award, and was named Best Documentary of the Year by the New York Film Critics Circle, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association and the National Society of Film Critics.

Citizenfour received the Academy Award for Best Documentary, as well as numerous other awards including a BAFTA, Directors Guild of America Award, Independent Spirit Award, Gotham Award, the German Filmpreis and Cinema Eye Honors. Her journalistic work exposing the mass surveillance programmes of the US National Security Agency (NSA) earned her the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service, and she received the George Polk Award for her reporting on national security.

Her Oscar-nominated film *My Country, My Country*, the first film in her Post-9/11 Trilogy, documents the U.S. occupation of Iraq, while the second part, *The Oath*, nominated for an Emmy, investigates the Guantanamo Bay prison and the US-led "war on terror". Her other films include *Risk*, *Flag Wars*, *Project X*, *Death of a Prisoner*, *The Program*, *Triple-Chaser* and *Terror Contagion*.

The Whitney Museum of American Art commissioned Poitras' first solo exhibition, entitled *Astro Noise*. Curated by Jay Sanders, the exhibition featured a series of immersive installations including *Anarchist*, *O'Say Can You See*, *Bed Down Location*, *Disposition Matrix*, *November 20, 2004* and *Last Seen*. She has also been commissioned to create film installations for Manifesta, and n.b.k. Gallery, Berlin.

In 2006, the US government placed her on a secret watch list and detained and interrogated her numerous times at the US border. In 2015, she successfully sued the government to obtain her classified FBI files. The hundreds of heavily redacted documents reveal physical and digital surveillance, the deployment of FBI agents to her screenings, the interception of her private communications and a classified counter-espionage investigation.

Laura Poitras has received the Peabody Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship and support from the Sundance Institute, Creative Capital, the Vital Projects Fund, Cinereach and other institutions. She is a co-founder of the Freedom of the Press Foundation, a member of the advisory board of Forensic Architecture, and a

member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. She co-founded The Intercept, First Look Media and Field of Vision. Her production company, Praxis Films, is based in New York and Berlin.

Save the date

25 March 2026: Programme announced
17 – 26 April: 57th edition of Visions du Réel
VdR-Industry: 19 – 22 April 2026

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57th edition of Visions du Réel: 17–26 April 2026

