

Dirk-Jan Visser, Jan Rothuizen, and Martijn van Tol

Refugee Republic

as part of the *A New Display: Visual Storytelling at a Crossroads* exhibition

Curator: Iris Sikking

Refugee Republic (2014) is an interactive documentary about everyday life in Domiz Camp, a Syrian refugee camp in northern Iraq. For the first time since World War II, there are more than 50 million refugees worldwide. The refugee camps across the world are rapidly growing into mini-societies, with refugees as citizens and relief organizations as governments. Like anyone else, the refugee-citizen goes to the baker, falls in love, argues with the neighbors, and brings the children to daycare after school. The refugee-citizen navigates between the opportunities and risks of the free markets in the camp and the sometimes helpful, sometimes intrusive camp government.

Artist Jan Rothuizen, multimedia journalist Martijn van Tol, and photographer Dirk-Jan Visser collaborated closely in developing this project. They decided to use the format of a web documentary to create an immersive experience and reach a wide and diverse audience.

The interactive graphical map serves as the main navigational tool. The user takes a stroll as a tourist would, exploring the city and meeting people like Ahmed (13), who skips school to look after his bird stall; Shixmous (63), the busy circumciser; Mahmoud, the tinkerer (23); and YouTube singer Fatma (16). Welcome to Refugee Republic.

The web documentary can be found online:
<http://refugeerepublic.submarinechannel.com>

Dirk-Jan Visser (1978) is a visual storyteller based in Jerusalem and the Netherlands. He is dedicated to creating photographic stories and designing visual concepts that convey strong but nuanced messages. The *Refugee Republic* website was nominated for the European CIVIS Online Media Prize and received the Dutch Design Future Award.