

SXSW 2025: How 'Territory' is revolutionizing VR accessibility with aesthetic access

Access is artist led.

By [Chance Townsend](#) on March 9, 2025



Credit: Kinetic Light / Double Eye Studios

At [SXSW 2025](#), the panel "Aesthetic Access for VR: Centering Disabled Artistry" showcased *Territory*, a groundbreaking [virtual reality](#) experience that proved that accessibility isn't just an add-on — it's an art form.

Created by Kinetic Light and Double Eye Studios, [Territory is the first fully "aesthetically accessible" VR experience](#). Instead of retrofitting an existing VR program with accessibility features like

captions and audio descriptions, the team built them into the creative process from the start.

"Access is no longer an accommodation that retroactively makes an experience accessible to disabled audiences," said Kinetic Light's Laurel Lawson during the panel. "Instead, access is the providence of art itself."

Set in a post-apocalyptic world, *Territory* tells its story through aerial dance, haptic feedback, and spatialized sound. Viewers take on the role of a "witness," feeling the impact of barbed wire both physically and metaphorically. The experience uses custom haptic motifs, allowing vibrations to convey movement and emotion — a game-changer for blind and low-vision users.

Even captions are reimaged. Instead of static text, *Territory's* captions move dynamically, following characters and poetically interpreting music and sound effects. "Most of the caption systems that we tested couldn't reach the level of detail [we wanted], so we had to construct something from scratch," said Kiira Benz, Double Eye's executive creative director.

Accessibility in VR is still evolving, but *Territory* sets a new standard — where access isn't just about inclusion but innovation. By making accessibility an artistic choice, Kinetic Light and Double Eye Studios challenge creators to rethink how VR can be truly immersive for all.

Lawson emphasized that "access is not backfilling" and should be integrated from the beginning because designing with accessibility in mind deepens artistic practice.