Valev Laube

FOUNDER, THE VL STUDIOS · CREATIVE DIRECTOR · WEB DESIGNER–DEVELOPER · AI STRATEGY & AUTOMATION

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Founder of The VL Studios, a New York brand, web and AI studio. Thirteen years building brands and the websites they convert on — and, since 2025, wiring the AI layer in behind them. The work spans what most organizations split across four vendors: brand identity, web design and development, structured-data SEO, and AI sales and marketing automation, delivered under one roof. Forty-plus client engagements across fashion, luxury, legal, wealth management, beauty, technology, theater and nonprofit, including Kenneth Cole, Steve Madden, Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf and Helen Yarmak International. Alongside the client work I founded and edit *The Northern Voices*, an independent English-language publication covering Nordic and Baltic communities across North America, and I compose and perform as a violinist. Forbes Under 30 nominee. US work authorization and EU citizenship; bilingual English and Estonian. Available for remote contract engagements on US hours.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Founder & Creative Director — OWN PRACTICE

2019 — PRESENT

The VL Studios New York, NY · contracting entity (LLC)

- Founded and lead a brand, web and AI studio serving US companies, with a focus on luxury, fashion and other high-end clients; own client relationships, creative direction, delivery and the business itself.
- Shipped 40+ engagements across fashion, luxury, legal, wealth management, beauty, technology, theater and nonprofit — from identity systems and art direction to full website builds and launch.
- Build across Webflow, Shopify, Squarespace, WordPress, Wix and custom code (React, three.js, MapLibre), with JSON-LD structured data and keyword architecture on nearly every project.
- Deliver AI implementation for clients: website chat agents, lead qualification and intake automation, AI workflow audits and AI-search (answer-engine) visibility.
- Run an in-house lab of interactive editorial projects — including *The Baltic Way*, a multilingual 3D story site built with archival photography, radio and film — as live demonstrations of the studio's craft.

Selected clients: Helen Yarmak International (fashion house, eCommerce), Almazan Law (Miami litigation), Artemis Wealth Advisors, Singing Revolution: The Musical (Broadway), Tian Jiang (Carnegie Hall pianist), Kenneth Cole, Steve Madden, Paula Abdul, Eurovision USA, Joe Haden, ZEX Media, Thomas Zeumer, FMO NYC, Viking Beauty Secrets, SurgeSend, HappAround, Atelium Jewelry, EuroCircle NYC, Heroic Magazine, Grapple Media, 1660 Vine, “Wildflower” (film), Estonian American National Council.

Director of Artificial Intelligence, Sr. Project Manager

FEB 2025 — PRESENT

Dragon Horse Agency Remote — Naples, FL / Santa Monica, CA

- Lead AI strategy and implementation at a multi-award-winning business and marketing agency, integrating AI across client marketing, sales and creative workflows.
- Design and ship production AI automation: inbound lead qualification and enrichment, personalized outreach sequencing, automated quoting and intake triage.
- Advise clients on where AI meaningfully replaces manual sales and marketing labor — and where it does not.

Founder & Editor

2024 — PRESENT

The Northern Voices New York, NY

- Founded and run an independent English-language publication covering Nordic and Baltic communities, culture and institutions across the United States and Canada — the only outlet reporting on all eight countries' communities in one place.
- Own the full stack end to end: editorial direction, reporting and writing, the Webflow build, JSON-LD structured data and technical SEO, newsletter, and advertising operations.
- Built and maintain a directory of roughly 55 camps, language programs and cultural events across North America, now a reference resource for the communities it covers.
- Developed the revenue model across programmatic advertising, direct sponsorship and institutional partnerships.

Marketing Director

2025

Nordic Artists of New York New York, NY

- Directed marketing and audience development for an initiative uniting Nordic and Baltic artists working in New York.

Project Manager

AUG 2023 — DEC 2024

Connective Web Design Remote

- Managed web design, development and marketing projects for high-end US clients at a full-service agency.
- Built and executed growth strategies spanning SEO, email, PPC and social; briefed and directed developers and designers through to delivery.
- Served as principal client liaison across branding, web and marketing engagements.

Creative Director

2022

ZEX Zuper Experience New York, NY

- Led brand and creative direction for an NFT marketplace and crypto talent agency, covering identity, product UI and campaign work.

Brand Manager & Content Designer

MAY 2018 — APR 2020

InProximity Theatre Company New York, NY

- Worked with the CEO to produce promotional content for the company's website and social channels, and managed online marketing and design for individual productions and events.
- Designed promotional and brand materials for company productions, including the Project W Theatre Festival (2018–2019) and *After* at 59E59 Theaters.

Creative Marketing Director

NOV 2017 — APR 2019

Kalevala the Musical New York, NY

- Developed the full brand presentation for an upcoming musical production with the production team.
- Directed a concept video and a music video; designed the visual identity and motion-based visuals.

Web & Multimedia Designer

JUN 2017 — JUL 2018

Marquee Brand Builders Remote

- Translated brand identity into a holistic web presence with the CEO and design team, supporting marketing across all online channels.
- Established SEO foundations, company email architecture and an enhanced branded visual system.

Creative Director

2016 — 2018

Estonian Cultural Days in New York — Foundation for Estonian Arts & Letters New York, NY

- Directed three annual festivals (2016, 2017 and 2018), covering artistic programming, brand identity and the full promotional campaign.
- Ran social campaigns, email programs, crowdfunding and festival donations; grew campaign reach by 240% over three years.

Creative Design Manager

MAY 2016 — AUG 2016

Sacatelle New York, NY

- Managed a team of ten designers with direct client ownership for Kenneth Cole, Steve Madden, Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf and Worlds Away.
- Led design, production and manufacture of marketing and merchandising materials; delivered 60+ designs monthly, all held to client brand guidelines.

Graphic & Product Design Intern

NOV 2015 — MAY 2016

Sacatelle New York, NY

- Collaborated with ten designers and senior management on portfolios and catalogs for prospective and returning clients.
- Worked across product design and merchandising — tote, jute, polypropylene, duffle and sports bags — including mockups for Starbucks and Lululemon.

Digital Media Specialist II–III

OCT 2014 — MAY 2018

University of Rochester — Rettner Hall for Media Arts & Innovation Rochester, NY

- Led a team of 16 designers heading the facility's advertising and marketing, overseeing production of 250+ designs per month.
- Managed lab support for a large university community: 3D printing and scanning, large-format printing and design software support.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION & CURATORIAL WORK

"Dawn till Dusk"

2022 — 2024

Co-creator with choreographer Diina Tamm. A multidisciplinary work combining contemporary dance, live music, Estonian folklore and early-twentieth-century archive recordings. Premiered at the Estonian House, New York; toured Florida and Maryland in 2023 and returned to New York in 2024. Producer, music director, visual designer and performing violinist.

"Tonality of Culture" — National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

2017

Curator. A music and dance program marking Estonia's centenary, exploring archive recordings through contemporary dance, folk material, visual art and animation. Presented with the Estonian Embassy and the University of Rochester; choreographed by Diina Tamm.

Estonian Cultural Days in New York

2016 — 2018

Artistic director, Foundation for Estonian Arts & Letters, across three annual festivals in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Programming, identity and campaign; reach grew 240% over the three years.

"Rochester Subway" — ExSpace Artist Collective

2017 — 2018

Artist and marketing lead on an augmented-reality documentary art project examining the sociopolitical traces left in an abandoned subway. Built the AR application on Unity; exhibited at the Sage Art Center in April 2018 with projections, AR overlays and audio.

Music — violin and composition

ONGOING

Violinist and composer working with Estonian and Nordic folk material. Albums: *Liminal* (2025), *Equinox* (2025), *Solstice* (2026) and *If My Violin Had Words* (2026).

EDUCATION

BA, Digital Media Studies and Studio Arts

2014 — 2018

University of Rochester Rochester, NY

- Minor in Political Philosophy; cluster in Graphics Programming. Degree conferred May 20, 2018.
- Cumulative GPA 3.54. Dean's List: Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017.
- Coursework included web page design and development, digital media toolkits, design in the digital age, advanced video and photography, experimental archives, principles of marketing, advertising and social media, and entrepreneurial thinking.

International Baccalaureate Diploma, Economics & Philosophy

2012 — 2014

United World College of the Adriatic Duino, Italy

CERTIFICATIONS

2021 — **Digital Marketing** — BrainStation
Holistic digital strategy across SEO, SEM, Google Analytics, content, social and email marketing.

2020 — **Google UX Design Professional Certificate** — Coursera
User-centered design, accessibility and equity-focused design across mobile, responsive web and cross-platform experiences.

2017 — **Digital Marketing Specialization** — Coursera
Customer behavior and digital marketing.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

2024	Juror — The One Club for Creativity, ONE Screen Short Film Festival
2022	Young European Heritage Makers Award — European Commission / European Heritage Days
2021	Top 100 Influencers in Marketing & Advertising — MARsum Global Marketing Conference
2020	Forbes Under 30 — Nominee, United States
2020	Best Poster Design — Nominee, PRISMA Independent Film Awards, for the short film *Wildflower*
2020	Best Poster Design — Rome Independent Film Awards
2018	Best Design Award — Winner, EstDocs Documentary Film Festival
—	Web Guru Awards — BestCSS and CSSLight

SKILLS

AI & AUTOMATION	OpenAI and Anthropic APIs, AI chat agents, prompt engineering, AI lead qualification and intake, automated outreach and quoting, workflow automation and integration, AI-search visibility, HubSpot, Zoho CRM
WEB & DEVELOPMENT	Webflow, Shopify, Squarespace, WordPress, Wix, React, HTML, CSS, JavaScript, three.js, MapLibre, Cloudflare, JSON-LD structured data, technical SEO, Google Analytics, Tag Manager
DESIGN	Brand identity, art direction, UI/UX, Figma, Adobe Creative Cloud (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects, Premiere Pro), Affinity Suite, Procreate
PRODUCTION	DaVinci Resolve, Final Cut Pro, Adobe Audition, Logic Pro, Pro Tools, photography, 3D modeling and rendering (Fusion 360, Blender, Spline)
EDITORIAL	Reporting and interviewing, long-form feature writing, editing, publication management, newsletter and audience development, advertising operations
MARKETING	Content strategy, email marketing, PPC, SEM, social media, PR and media placement, market research, brand management, marketing automation
LEADERSHIP	Creative direction, project management, team leadership (10–16 designers), client relations, public speaking
LANGUAGES	English (bilingual), Estonian (bilingual)

VOLUNTEER WORK

- Mentor to young designers and entrepreneurs, providing guidance on building a professional practice.
- Community art projects and initiatives promoting creative engagement in Rochester and New York City.
- Ran free online workshops in video editing, social media and design for independent artists and entrepreneurs across the US, Canada and Europe during the pandemic.