

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY: SIMON SCHNEIDER

CO-WRITTEN BY: LIA KULAKAUSKAS

PRODUCED BY: MAXWELL KAGAN

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY: ELIOT GRIGO

EDITED BY: JASON LUO

ALFRED P. SLOAN
FOUNDATION
PRODUCTION AWARD 2024
NOMINEE

ROY W. DEAN
SHORT FILM GRANT 2024
FINALIST

DEGREE OF CERTAINTY

A 15 min AFI Conservatory Thesis Film

AFI CONSERVATORY

**50 YEARS AGO, A SMALL
GROUP OF PEOPLE HAD THE
CHANCE TO SAVE THE WORLD.**

THEY DECIDED AGAINST IT.

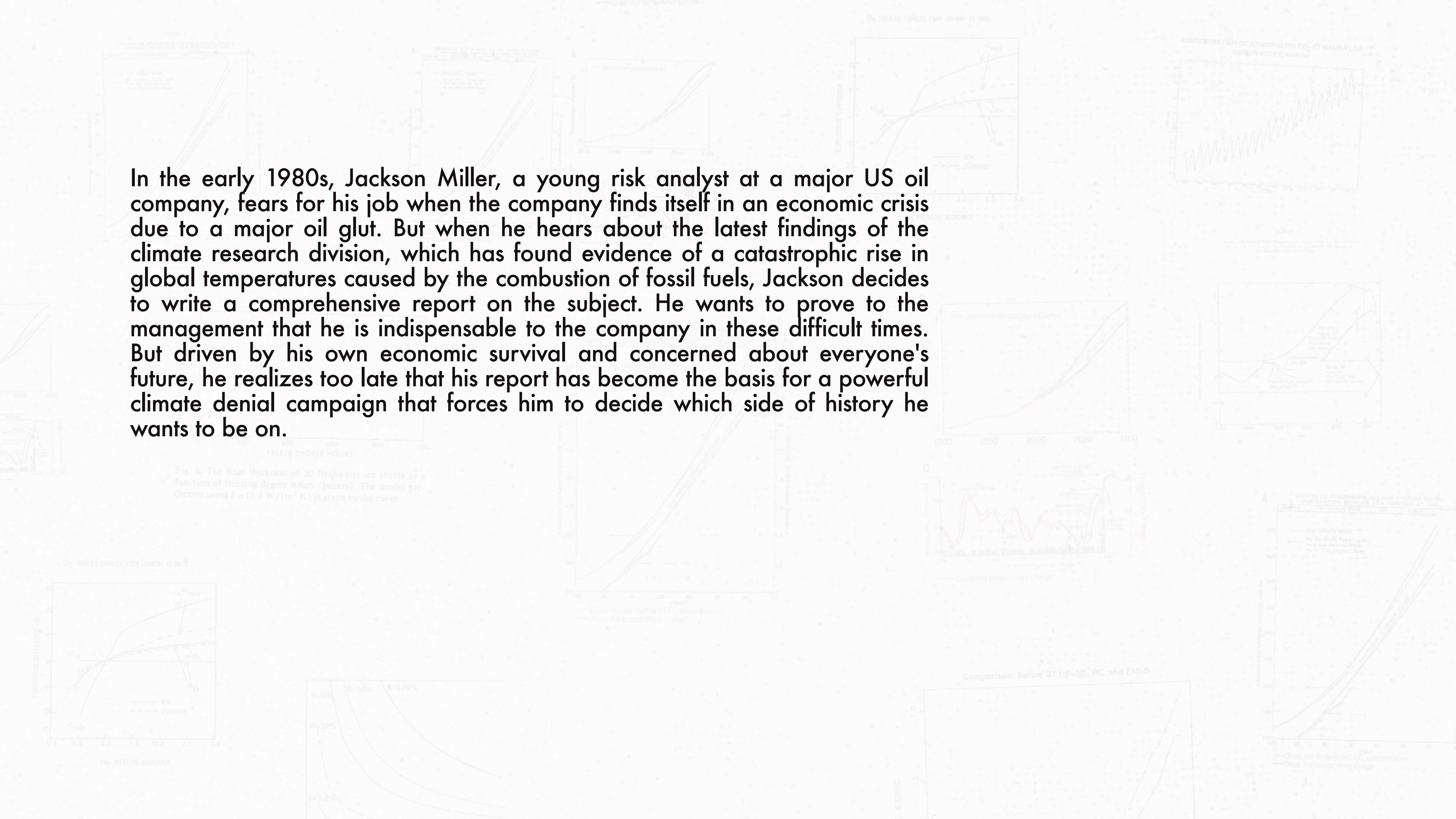
**AND CREATED THE MASSIVE
ENVIRONMENTAL AND
MISINFORMATION CRISIS WE
LIVE IN TODAY.**

STORY



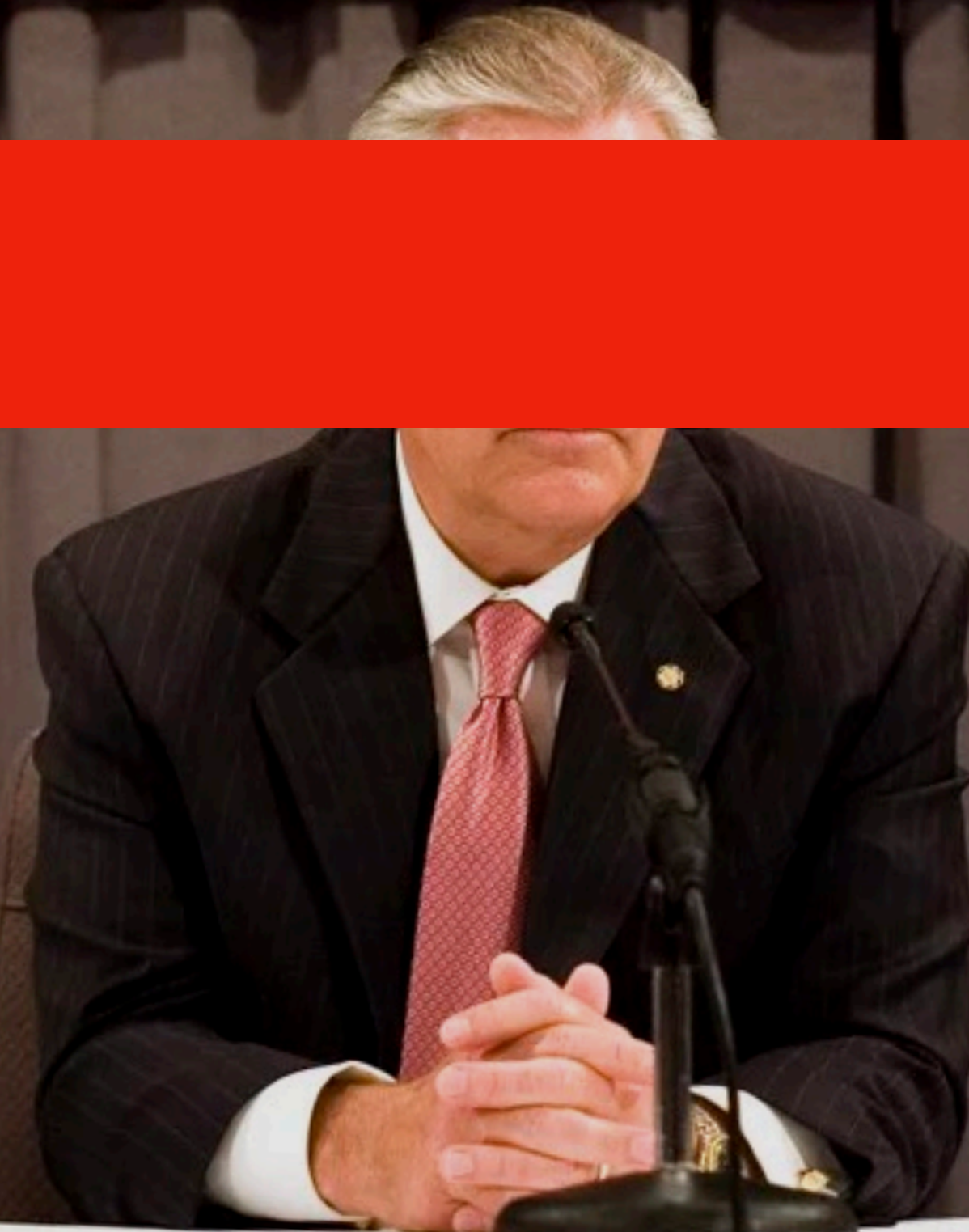
In the early 1980s, Jackson Miller, a young risk analyst at a major US oil company, fears for his job when the company finds itself in an economic crisis due to a major oil glut. But when he hears about the latest findings of the climate research division, which has found evidence of a catastrophic rise in global temperatures caused by the combustion of fossil fuels, Jackson decides to write a comprehensive report on the subject. He wants to prove to the management that he is indispensable to the company in these difficult times. But driven by his own economic survival and concerned about everyone's future, he realizes too late that his report has become the basis for a powerful climate denial campaign that forces him to decide which side of history he wants to be on.

Fig. 6. The final thickness of 30 freshwater ice sheets as a function of freezing degree hours (points). The model prediction using $h = 11.5 \text{ W/(m}^2 \text{ K)}$ is given by the curve.



ExxonMobil

HISTORY



In the late 1970s, Exxon was the largest energy company in the world and was eager to move away from oil to become a modern and progressive energy company. The company's own research department was leading the development of renewable and alternative energy sources. Part of this vibrant scientific hub was a team of climate scientists who not only founded their discipline but discovered the man-made climate crisis with highly accurate and sophisticated studies. However, during the 1980s oil glut, instead of using this knowledge to complete the energy transformation, Exxon's management took a conservative backswing and widened its oil operations, lobbying against fossil fuel legislation and launching one of the biggest misinformation campaigns against their own scientific findings that persists to this day.

Directions for climate research

Climate science is expanding rapidly. Scientists need to be kept abreast of the latest research to inform policy. Research should be directed to fill knowledge gaps and to understand the risks of climate change. Research should be directed to fill knowledge gaps and to understand the risks of climate change.

Research should address policy needs

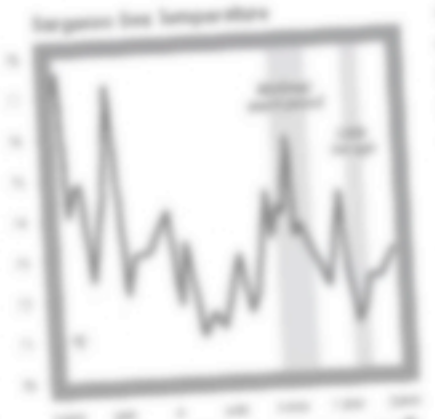
Research should be directed to fill knowledge gaps and to understand the risks of climate change. Research should be directed to fill knowledge gaps and to understand the risks of climate change.

Specialized programs should be set up to focus on specific areas of research. Specialized programs should be set up to focus on specific areas of research.



Unsettled Science

Unsettled Science: The IPCC report on the future of the world. The IPCC report on the future of the world.



Unsettled Science: The IPCC report on the future of the world. The IPCC report on the future of the world.

Apocalypse no

Apocalypse no: The IPCC report on the future of the world. The IPCC report on the future of the world.

Apocalypse no: The IPCC report on the future of the world. The IPCC report on the future of the world.

"The story of Exxon is the origin story of climate denial."

- Amy Westervelt, Journalist

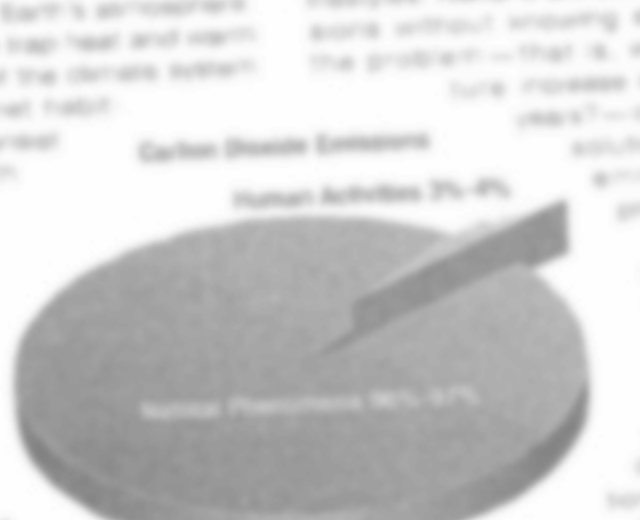
Who told you the earth was warming... Chicken Little?



Science: what we know and don't know



Science: what we know and don't know. The IPCC report on the future of the world.



Science: what we know and don't know. The IPCC report on the future of the world.

Lies they tell our children

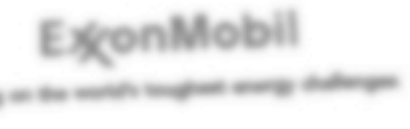
Lies they tell our children: The IPCC report on the future of the world. The IPCC report on the future of the world.

Lies they tell our children: The IPCC report on the future of the world. The IPCC report on the future of the world.

Tomorrow's energy needs

Tomorrow's energy needs: The IPCC report on the future of the world. The IPCC report on the future of the world.

Tomorrow's energy needs: The IPCC report on the future of the world. The IPCC report on the future of the world.



ExxonMobil. Meeting the world's toughest energy challenges.



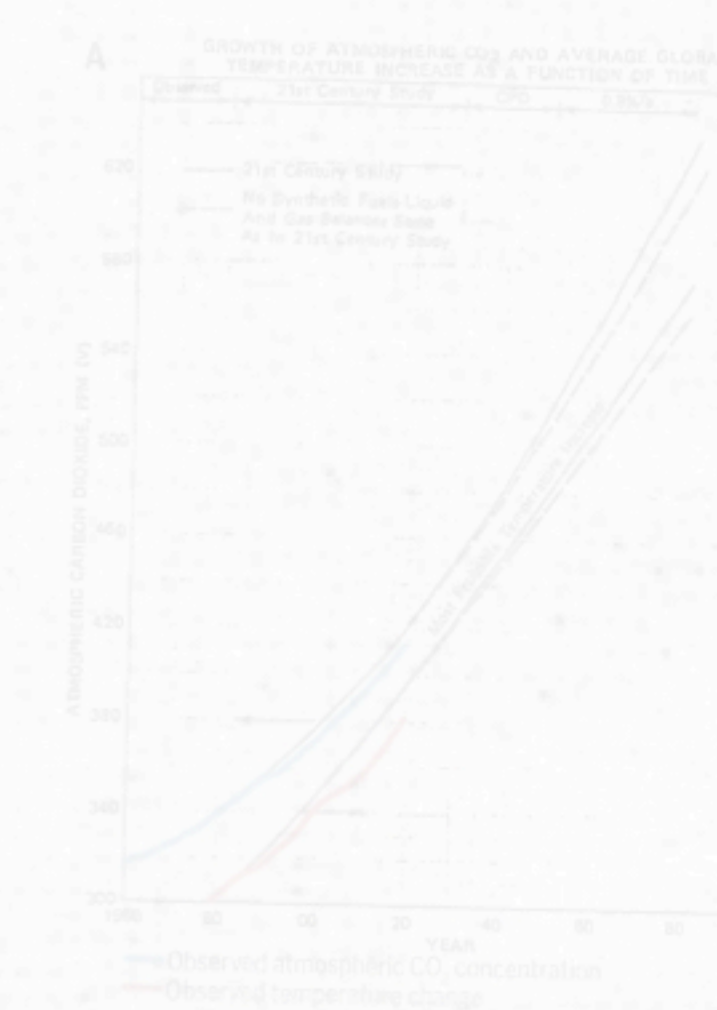
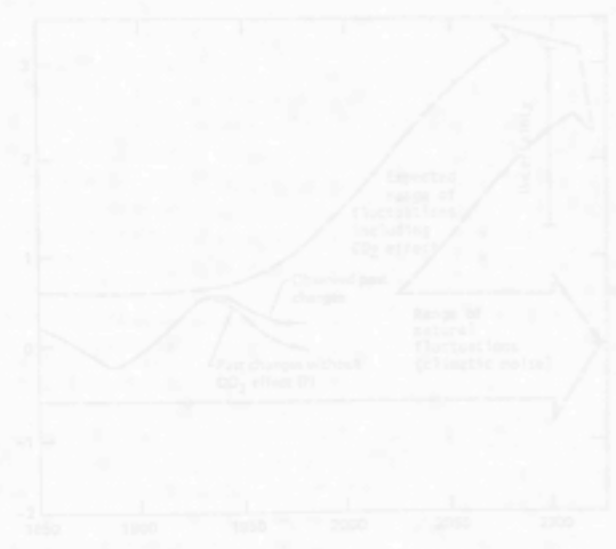
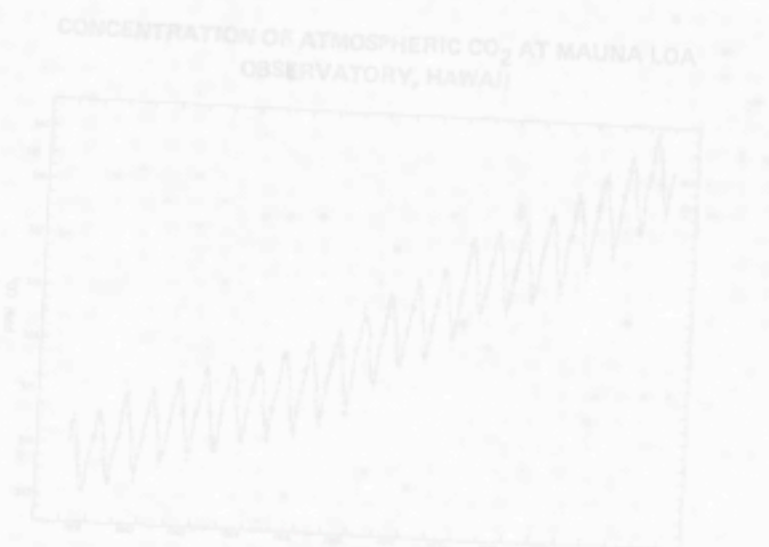
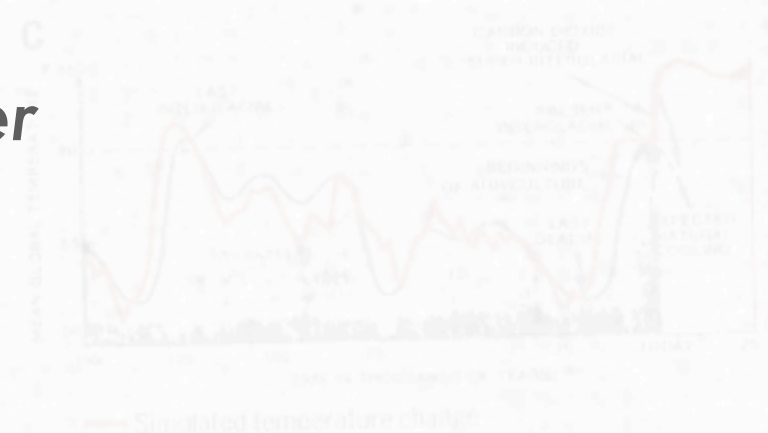
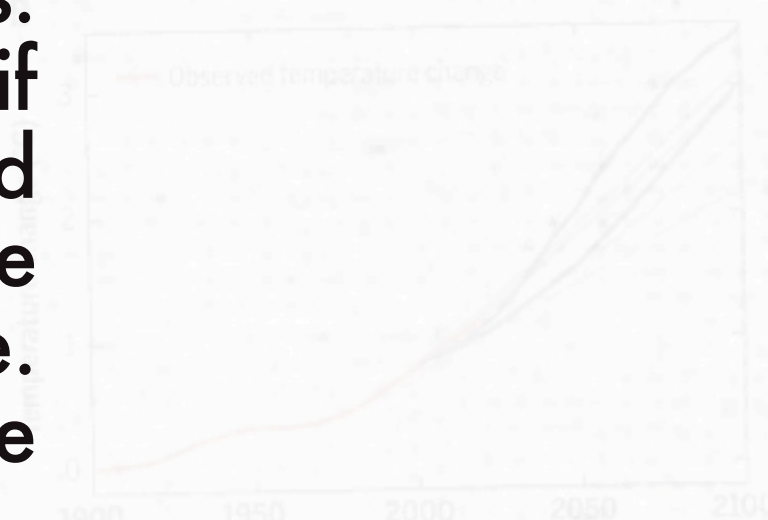
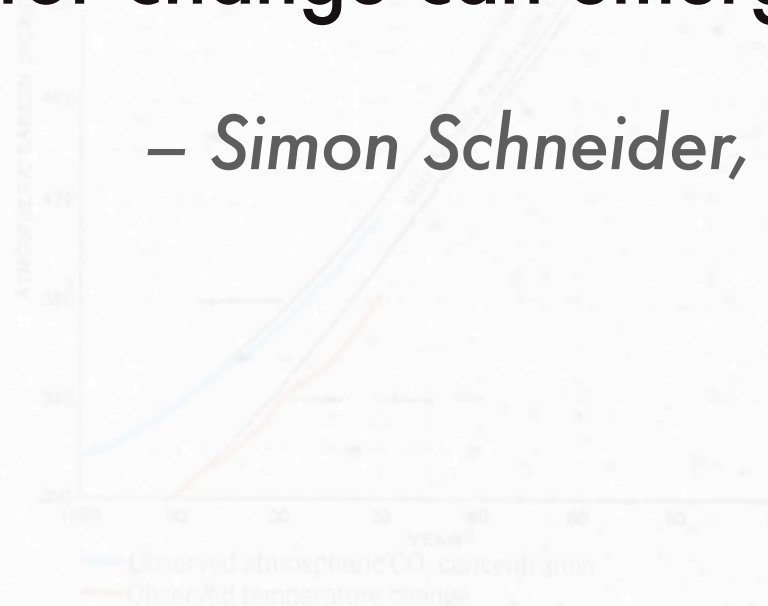
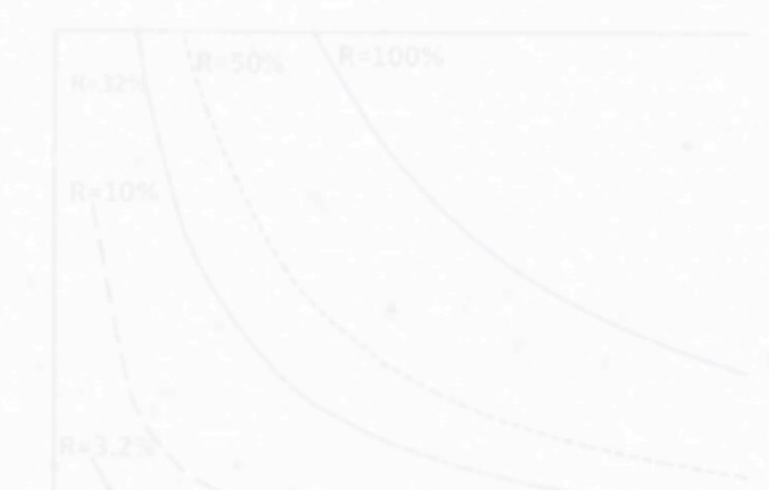
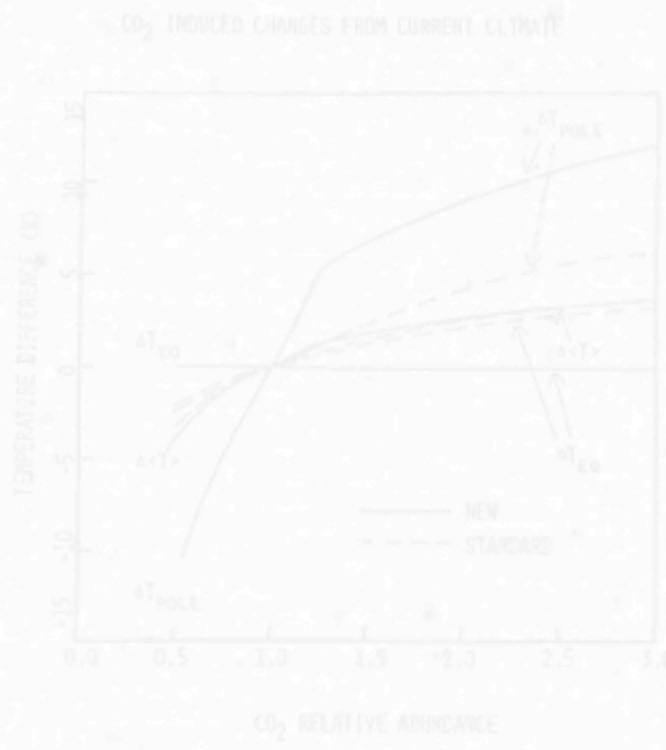
OBJECTIVE



"As a son of a judge and a psychologist I learned early on that we can only deal with the problems of our time if we agree on a common factual basis. Coming from this academic environment it is hard to bear how we as a society have discredited and politicized the work of scientists in recent years. This trend, which has been significantly intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, is extremely worrying and one of the biggest threats to our liberal democracies. I deeply believe that we can only overcome the defining crisis of our time if we can solve the misinformation crisis and find a common factual base rooted in science. I believe in the power of cinema to let us create a collective experience that makes the pressing issues of our time emotionally tangible. I'm convinced that only when we as humans look at ourselves and examine the problems of our time, a collective will for change can emerge."

– Simon Schneider, Director & Writer

Fig. 6. The final thickness of 30 freshwater ice sheets as a function of freezing degree hours (points). The model prediction using $h = 11.5 \text{ W}/(\text{m}^2 \text{ K})$ is given by the curve.



REFERENCE FILMS



A gripping thriller that explores the corporate structures that lead to self-centered and short-term thinking on a big scale.



A grounded, realistic and relevant investigative drama with a deep emotional impact.



An illustration of human terror and complacency, through the tension of what is on screen, and off screen.

TEAM





SIMON SCHNEIDER

DIRECTOR & WRITER

Graduated 2021 with a Bachelor's degree in film directing from ifs international film school Cologne, Germany. He worked as a director and writer for German public television and participated in the young filmmakers program TP2 Talentpool. His short film **MADE IN GERMANY** won the 2022 Audience Award at the Max Ophüls Preis Film Festival and the Fest Award at the FEST New Directors New Films Festival. His work has been screened at film festivals worldwide and been broadcasted on networks like ARD, ARTE and Disney+. Since 2023 he is a directing fellow at the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory, Class of 2025.

FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

SILENT Director

Horror | 9 min | 2024

AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

I'M WITH YOU Director

Drama | 18 min | 2019

Ifs internationale filmschule köln GmbH

RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS Director, Writer

Comedy/Satire | 12 min | 2023

AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

WHILE WE ARE HERE Director, Writer, Producer

Comedy | 7 min | 2018

Ifs internationale filmschule köln GmbH

MADE IN GERMANY Director, Writer, Producer

Comedy/Satire | 24 min | 2022

Ifs internationale filmschule köln GmbH

TRUE Director, Writer, Producer

Thriller | 20 min | 2018

Dare-To-Fail-Production GbR

AWARDS (EXERPT)

Artist Scholarship of the DAAD German Academic Exchange Service 2023 | Fulbright Scholarship Nominee for Foreign Students 2023
AFI Scholarship 2024 | Audience Award Winner, Film Festival Max Opühs Prize for "Made in Germany" 2022 | Jury Prize Winner:
Best Middle length Film, Filmfest Bremen for "Made in Germany" 2023 | Producers Network Award Winner, Robert Bosch Foundation
for "Made in Germany" 2020 | Pitching Award Winner, FEST New Directors New Films Festival for "Made in Germany" 2020

LIA KULAKAUSKAS

CO-WRITER

Holds a Bachelor's in Audiovisual Studies from the University of São Paulo, Brazil. Since college, she has worked in different storytelling roles as an editor, writer and director. Her works cutting films include internationally renowned features, such as MADALENA and PENDULAR. She also edited TV-Shows for HBO, Paramount as well as the Netflix original series 3% and KISSING GAME. GROUNDED, her first short film as a screenwriter, was screened internationally and won the Audience Award in Tiradentes. She is one of the directors of FERAS, a series in which she also collaborated as a screenwriter. Kulakauskas created and directed the two-season documentary series PAPERBACK TRAVEL. Since 2023 she is a screenwriting fellow at the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory, Class of 2025.

FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

DEEP TISSUE Writer
Action | 9 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

PLATINUM Writer
Drama/coming-of-age | 13 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

INVISIBLE GIRL Writer
Dramatic Comedy | 12 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

FERAS Writer, Director, Editor
Dramatic Comedy | TV Series, 13 x 30 min | 2019
MTV Brasil

GROUNDED Writer
Comedy | 15 min | 2014

COPAN Director, Writer
Documentary | 13 min | 2007

AWARDS (EXERPT)

Fulbright Scholarship Award for Foreign Students 2023 | Best TV Series Editing Award at Brazilian Critic Awards for "Kissing Game" 2020
Best Film Editing at 11th Curta Taquary (Brazil) for "Tower" 2017 | Tribeca Film Institute Mentorship Award at BRLab 2016
Audience Award at Tiradentes Film Festival for "Grounded" 2014 | Language Research Award at the Brazilian University Film Festival for "Copan" 2007





MAXWELL KAGAN

PRODUCER

Holds a Bachelors degree in Media Storytelling from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. He has an extensive background working in film and TV development at companies such as Marc Platt Productions and Sight Unseen. Prior to enrolling in AFI's producing program, he spent three years working in entertainment law and management for artists including Charlie Puth and Lauren-Spencer Smith. Since 2023 he is a producing fellow at the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory, Class of 2025. There his script, **HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR MAN**, was an official selection of the 2025 AFI Thesis Committee.

FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

BREAKING & ENTERING Producer
Thriller | 12 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

CLIFF Producer
Comedy | 10 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR MAN Writer
Comedy | 15 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

AVEC LE TEMPS Producer
Drama | 2 min | 2023
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

END OF THE WORLD Producer, Writer
Comedy | 10 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS Producer
Comedy | 12 min | 2023
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

AWARDS (EXERPT)

Scholarship by the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory
Finalist for the Roy. W. Dean Grant for **DEGREE OF CERTAINTY**
Nominee for **BEST DRAMATIC SHORT** for **BREAKING & ENTERING** - City of Angels Film Festival
Finalist for **BREAKING & ENTERING** at the **ETHOS** Film Awards.

ELIOT GRIGO

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Originally from Rockport, Maine, Grigo received a BFA in Film, from Syracuse University in 2017. He studied 35mm filmmaking in Prague at FAMU, and attended photographic workshops at Rochester Institute of Technology and Maine Media. Since then, Grigo has worked in New York with brands such as Nike, Calvin Klein, and Christian Dior, while shooting narrative shorts. Most notably, LA MUJER DE HECTOR (HECTOR'S WOMAN), which premiered and was nominated for 'Best of Festival' at the 2021 Palm Springs International Film Festival; a winner at the 2022 Miami Film Festival; and received a 2022 Vimeo Staff Pick. Since 2023 he is a Cinematography Fellow at the AFI Conservatory, Class of 2025.

FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

THE SCREEN Cinematographer
Experimental | 2 min | 2024
American Film Institute Conservatory

FINDING BEAST Cinematographer
Documentary | 18 min | 2022
FOFIF, Olivia Accardo

CLASSMATES Cinematographer
Drama | 19 min | 2022
Columbia University

KNOCK Cinematographer
Horror | 9 min | 2021
Independent

HECTOR'S WOMAN Cinematographer
Drama | 18 min | 2019
Columbia University

FOR MY LOVERS Cinematographer
Drama | 10 min | 2016
FAMU, in association with Barandov Studios

AWARDS (EXERPT)

Nominated for 'Best of Festival' at Palm Springs International Film Festival 2021 | Winner of WarnerMedia One Fifty Award for 'Hector's Woman' at Miami Film Festival 2022 | Winner for 'Best Documentary Short' at Kino Short Film for 'Finding Beast' 2021
Winner for 'Best Short Film' at New Faces New Voices for 'Hector's Woman' 2021 | Winner for 'Best Director' at Tide Film Festival 2022
Honorable Mention at the Woodstock Film Festival for 'Hector's Woman' 2021





JASON LUO

EDITOR

Recent graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Film, Video, New Media, and Animation. Co-founding Dope Film Studio with like-minded filmmakers, he has pursued projects offering many creative and commercial opportunities. Skilled as an editor, sound designer, and cinematographer, Jason's portfolio includes award-winning short films FOUND YOU and PERSONA, with FOUND YOU being a 2022 Independent Shorts Awards finalist. Since 2023 he is an editing fellow at the AFI American Film Institute Conservatory, Class of 2025.

FILMOGRAPHY (EXERPT)

BRING MY GRANDMA BACK! Editor
Comedy | 10 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

PROSPECT Editor
Drama | 11 min | 2024
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS Editor
Comedy | 12 min | 2023
AFI American Film Institute Conservatory

FOUND YOU Editor, Cinematographer
Drama | 6 min | 2022
Dope Film Studio

FIVE POINT SEVEN Editor, Cinematographer
Thriller | 14 min | 2022
Dope Film Studio

PEGASUS Editor, Cinematographer
Horror | 8 min | 2018
School of the Art Institute of Chicago

AWARDS (EXERPT)

Annual Award Finalist, Independent Shorts Awards for "Found You" 2022

AFI AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE CONSERVATORY

The American Film Institute is a non-profit organization that champions the future of the moving image as an art form and believes in the revolutionary power of visual storytelling to share diverse perspectives, inspire empathy and drive culture forward. The AFI Conservatory is the graduate-level program inside the institute that trains the future generation of narrative filmmakers. It counts Ari Aster, Patty Jenkins, Darren Aronofsky, Edward Zwick, Terrence Malick and David Lynch as Alumni and is ranked the #1 film school in America.

The AFI thesis film is the crowning achievement of this two-year tenure and showcases in a rigorous nine-month collaborative process the mastery of filmmaking achieved by each fellow. The 15-minute films are showcased each year at AFI FEST, get screened at national and international film festivals and receive recognition worldwide.

AFI thesis films have been awarded with 18 Student Academy Awards, 2 Academy Awards and 10 Oscar nominations. Notable AFI Thesis Films include Ari Aster's breakout debut short *THE STRANGE THING ABOUT THE JOHNSONS*, the Academy Award nominated film *DAY ONE*, Max Barbakow and Andy Siara's *THE DUKE*, Chloe Okuno's *SLUT* and Halyna Hutchins' film *HIDDEN*, along with Leo Behrens' *SKIN*, which just won the Gold Metal at the 2023 Student Academy Awards.

All AFI thesis films can be watched at www.watch.afi.com

**#1 FILM SCHOOL
IN AMERICA**
2022 | 2023 *Hollywood*
REPORTER



Alumni Recognition

Last Five Years

Academy Awards

15 Nominations 4 Wins

Emmy Awards

87 Nominations 19 Wins

Major Festivals

350 Alumni on 481 Films

After their MFA film school training, AFI Conservatory filmmakers go on to make enormous cultural impact that resonates and endures far beyond the halls of AFI

AFI DOCS AFI FEST Berlin Cannes London New York Sundance
SXSW Telluride Toronto Tribeca and Venice
Festivals updated as of Jan 1 2024
Awards updated as of Mar 11 2024

CONTACT

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PRODUCER

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