

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.

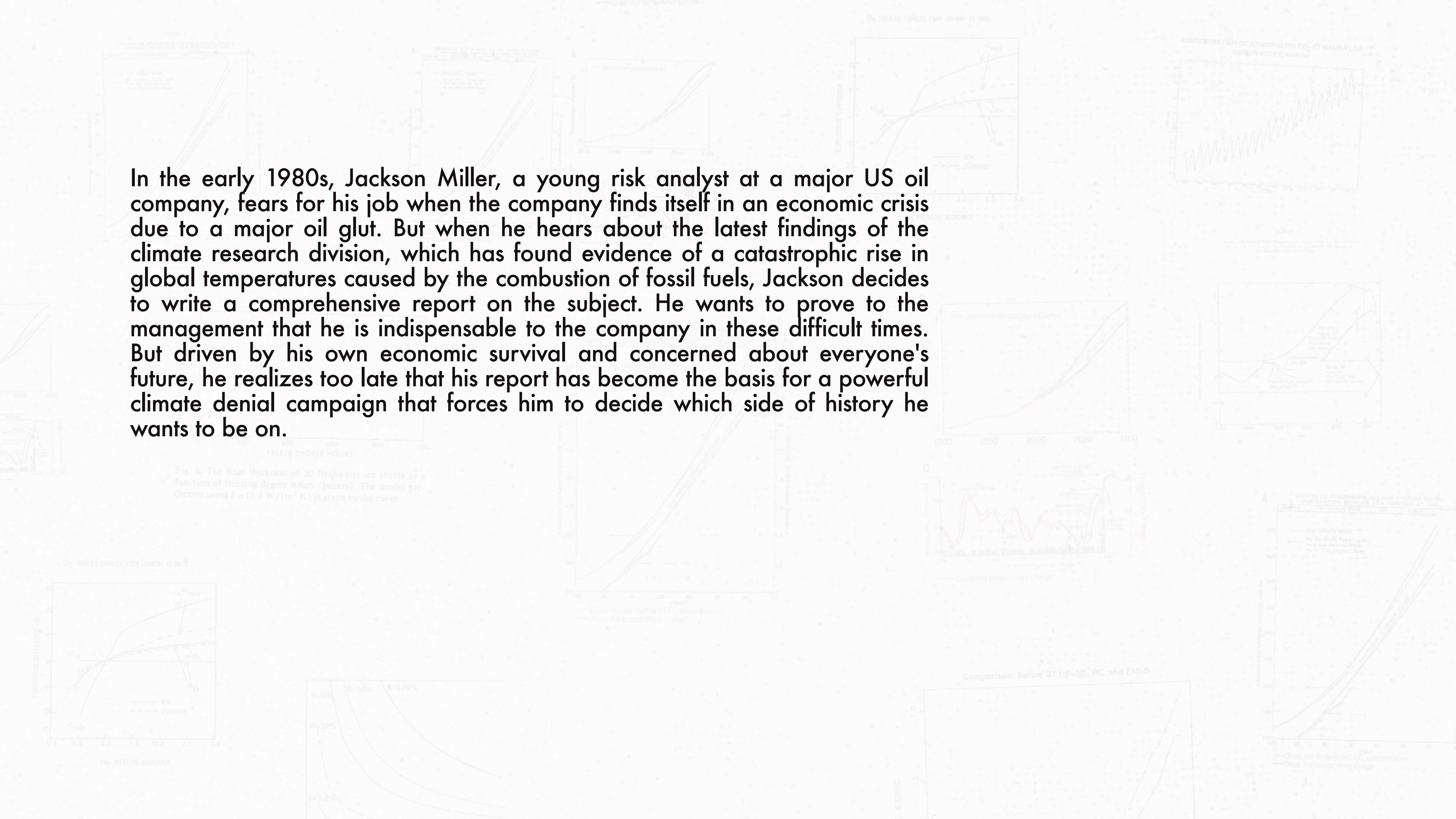
**AND CREATED THE MASSIVE
ENVIRONMENTAL AND
MISINFORMATION CRISIS WE
LIVE IN TODAY.**

STORY



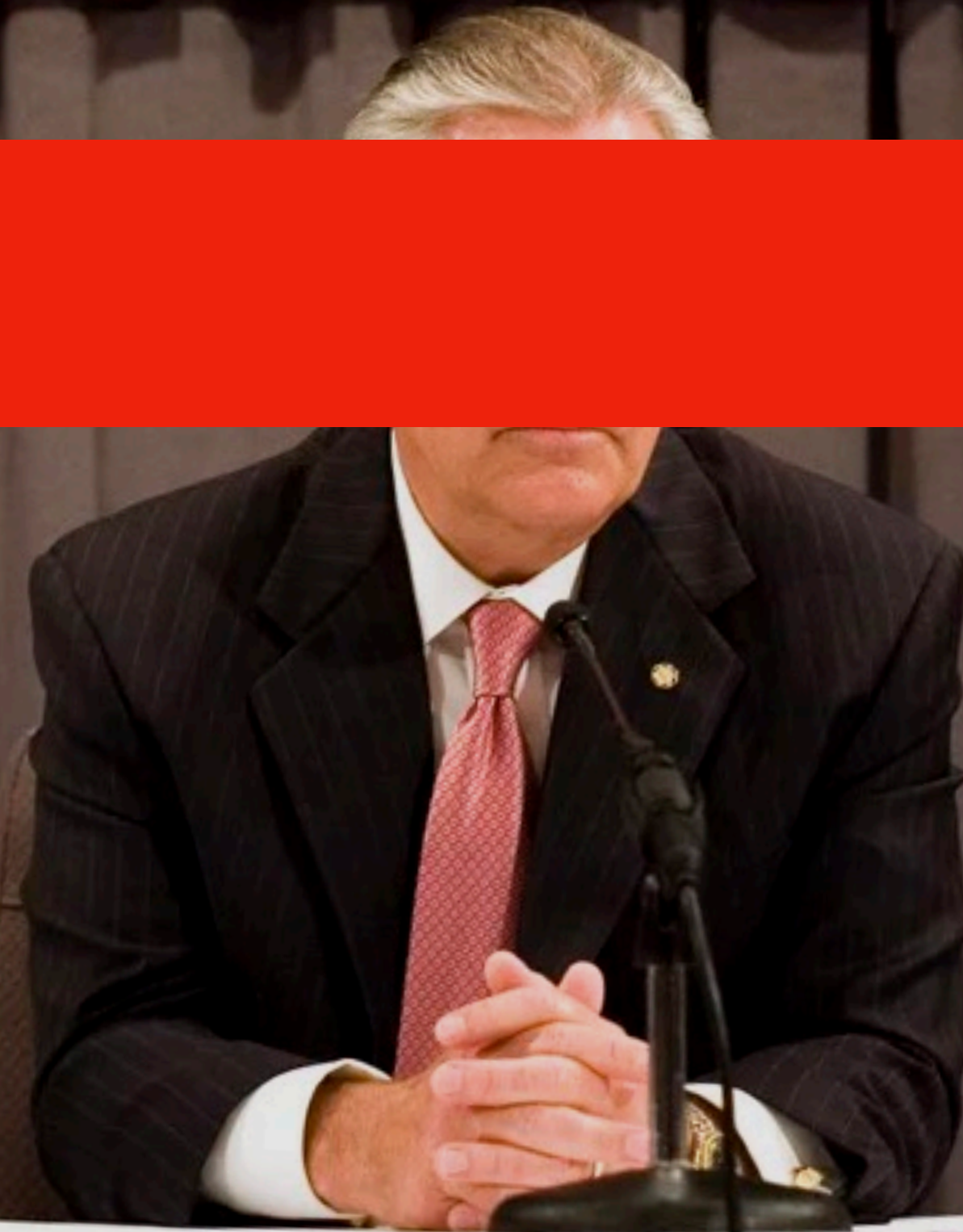
In the early 1980s, Jackson Miller, a young risk analyst at a major US oil company, fears for his job when the company finds itself in an economic crisis due to a major oil glut. But when he hears about the latest findings of the climate research division, which has found evidence of a catastrophic rise 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 $h = 11.5 \text{ W}/(\text{m}^2 \text{ K})$ 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 are working to understand the complex system of Earth's climate, and to predict future changes. This requires a combination of observational data and computer models. The National Science Foundation is supporting a number of programs to advance climate research.

Under a structured effort to address the current climate, scientists are working to understand the complex system of Earth's climate, and to predict future changes. This requires a combination of observational data and computer models. The National Science Foundation is supporting a number of programs to advance climate research.

Research should address policy needs

Specialized programs should aim to address specific needs of policymakers and the public. This includes research on the impacts of climate change, and on the effectiveness of different policy options. The National Science Foundation is supporting a number of programs to advance climate research.

The U.S. can lead the world in climate research. This requires a combination of observational data and computer models. The National Science Foundation is supporting a number of programs to advance climate research.



Unsettled Science

Recent weather forecasts are more accurate than ever. This is due to advances in computer modeling and observational data. However, there are still many uncertainties in our understanding of the climate system.



Climate change is a global issue that affects everyone. We need to take action now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the changes that are already occurring.

Scientists are working to understand the complex system of Earth's climate, and to predict future changes. This requires a combination of observational data and computer models. The National Science Foundation is supporting a number of programs to advance climate research.

Apocalypse no

For the first half of 1992, America was inundated by the media with dire predictions of global warming catastrophes. All of which seemed to be aimed at heating up the rhetoric from the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro last June.

Unfortunately, the media hype proved that the sky was falling did not properly justify the consensus of the scientific community. After the Earth Summit, there was a noticeable lack of headlines about the warning systems as well.

Everyone, of course, remembers the Earth Summit and the tone of paper used up in reporting on it—paper now found in landfill around the world. But few people ever heard of a major document issued at the same time and called the "Hendberg Appeal."

Perhaps that is because the Appeal urged Summit attendees to avoid making important environmental decisions based on "pseudo-scientific arguments of fear and non-scientific data."

Traditions of greenhouse gases. And it arises again when climate prediction models are used to estimate Earth's temperature will drop dramatically in the next century and—based on such models—to propose policy decisions that must drastically affect the economy.

According to Arizona State University climatologist Dr. Robert C. Balling in his book, The Heavens Debate (San Francisco: Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, 1992), our knowledge of the interplay between oceans and the atmosphere improves. "Model predictions must be treated with considerable caution."

Moreover, models don't simulate the complexity of clouds, nor do they deal adequately with sea level, snow or changes in intensity of the sun's energy.

Other scientists have an even more interesting viewpoint. Nobel atmospheric physicist S. Fred Singer, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Science & Environmental Policy Project, "is not afraid of a modest warming may well be desirable."

ExxonMobil logo and tagline: "Being on the earth's toughest energy challenges."

"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



As the debate over climate change heats up, science is being challenged by the call for solutions. At stake is a complex issue with many questions. Some things we know for certain. Others are far from certain.

First, we know greenhouse gases account for less than one percent of Earth's atmosphere. The ability of these gases to trap heat and warm Earth is an important part of the climate system because it makes our planet habitable.



the past century may bear a "fingerprint" of human activity. The fingerprint was sketched after an IPCC lead author considered the "tantalizing" evidence in computer climate modeling.

Human-induced factors at Kyoto are being asked to embrace proposals that could have potentially huge impacts on economies and industries. Nations are being urged to act without knowing what the severity of such a crisis would be.

Second, a decade of science is likely to provide more answers on what factors affect global warming, then by improving our decision-making. We just don't have the information to answer it.

Lies they tell our children

"I don't have a future." With tears streaming down her face, a 13-year-old girl made this bleak assessment to her father. To back up her pessimism, she had brought home from school a newspaper graphed sheet listing the factors that would lead her generation in the next 25 years worldwide famine, overpopulation, air pollution, so bad that everyone would wear a gas mask, polluted rivers and streams that would mandate cleaning tablets in drinking water—a greenhouse effect that would melt the polar ice caps and devastate U.S. coastal cities, a cancer epidemic brought on by damage to the ozone layer.

Moved by the girl's misery, her father, Herbert J. London of the Hudson Institute and New York University, wrote a book, Why Are They Lying to Our Children? The book documents how some of the myths of the 1960s and 1970s—and some much older parables—are being perpetuated and taught as gospel truth in some of our schools.

And the book raises a question in our minds: Will the next generation have any better understanding of science and technology—both their merits and their problems—than our own?

in the U.S. are less than half what they were from 1967 to 1987. The amount of unhealthy sulfur dioxide in the air has been steadily declining since 1970.

Second, Professor London finds, my thoughts nature do eternally bring us disturbed by man. It's a hard schoolbook that talks about wilderness teaching radiation into the air, foods that overwhelm our diets, and medicines that overwhelm our bodies.

Professor London's conclusion—with which we heartily agree—is that we should help our children think a themselves and their parents and their problems—than our own.

Tomorrow's energy needs

The great light for the fossil-fuel energy that the world's energy needs in 2025 and beyond. On top of that, high levels of air pollution, global warming, and the depletion of natural resources are all expected to be worsened by the burning of fossil fuels.

Let's face it, the world's energy needs are growing rapidly. And particularly in the power generation sector, it's hard to see how we can meet the world's energy needs in a sustainable way. One of the most important factors in developing new and better ways of generating power is the use of renewable energy.

Energy experts agree the world has ample supplies of wind, solar, and hydroelectric power. It's just a matter of developing the technology to harness these sources of energy. Wind energy is particularly promising because it's clean, renewable, and has a long history of use.

Third, we know greenhouse gases account for less than one percent of Earth's atmosphere. The ability of these gases to trap heat and warm Earth is an important part of the climate system because it makes our planet habitable.

Fourth, a decade of science is likely to provide more answers on what factors affect global warming, then by improving our decision-making. We just don't have the information to answer it.

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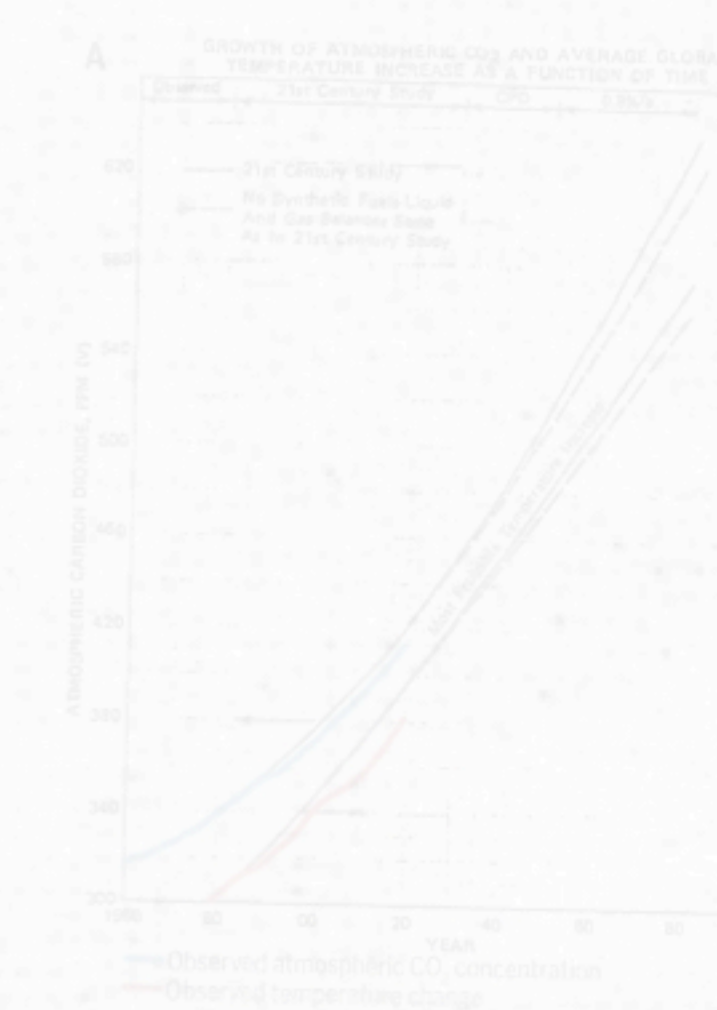
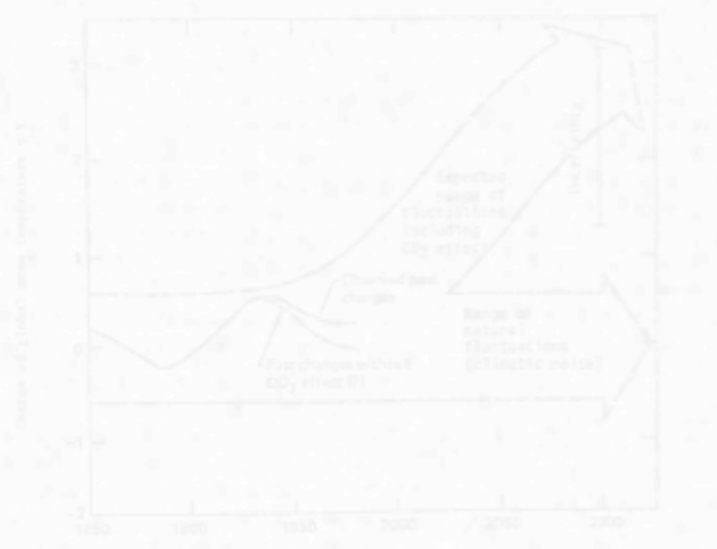
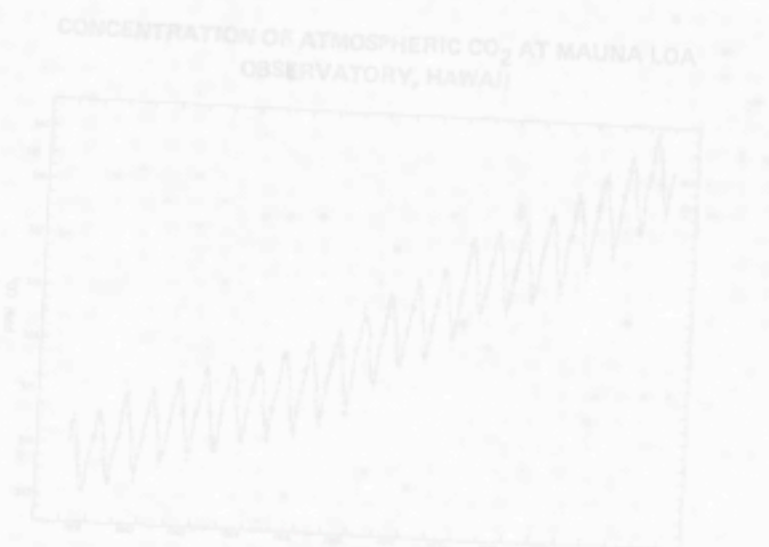
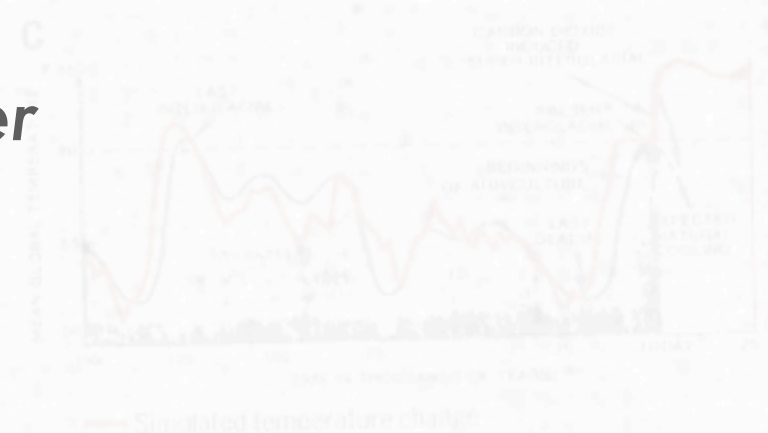
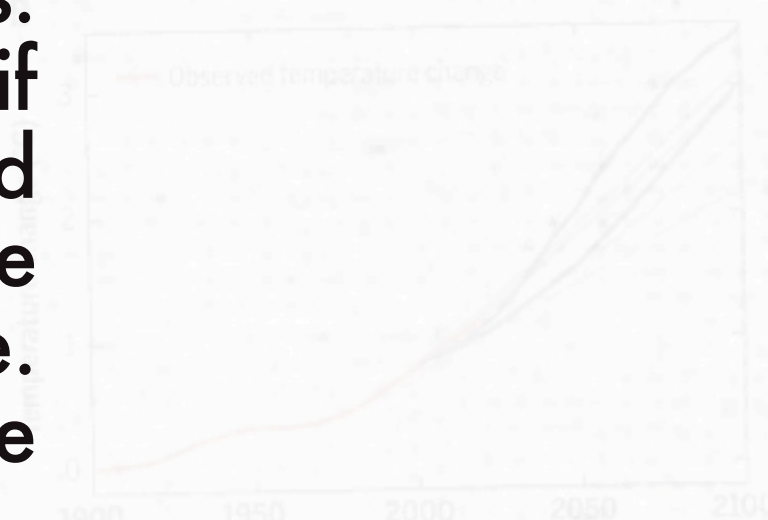
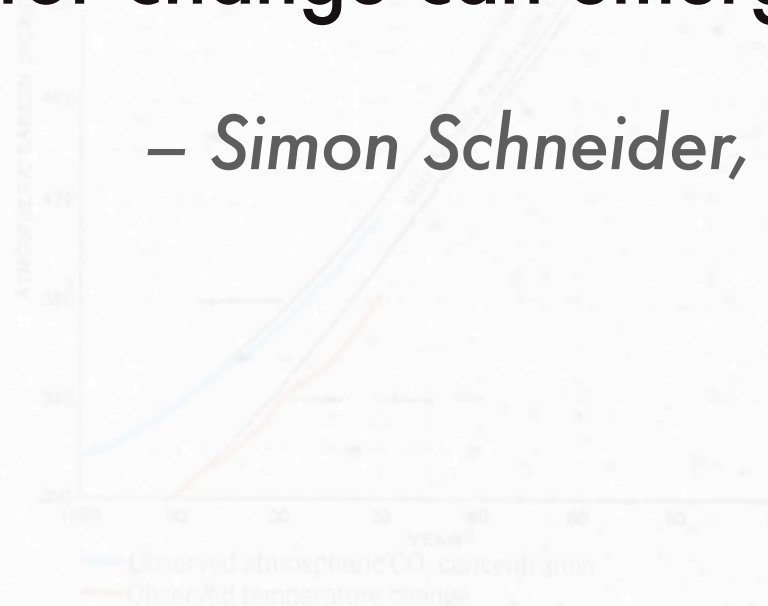
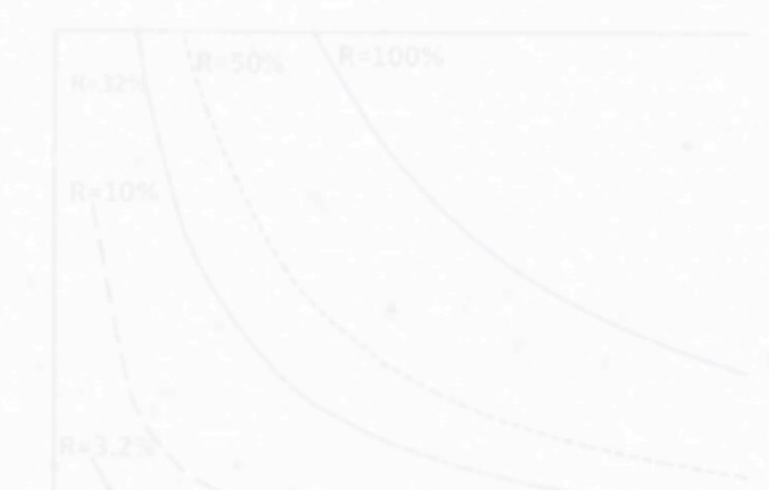
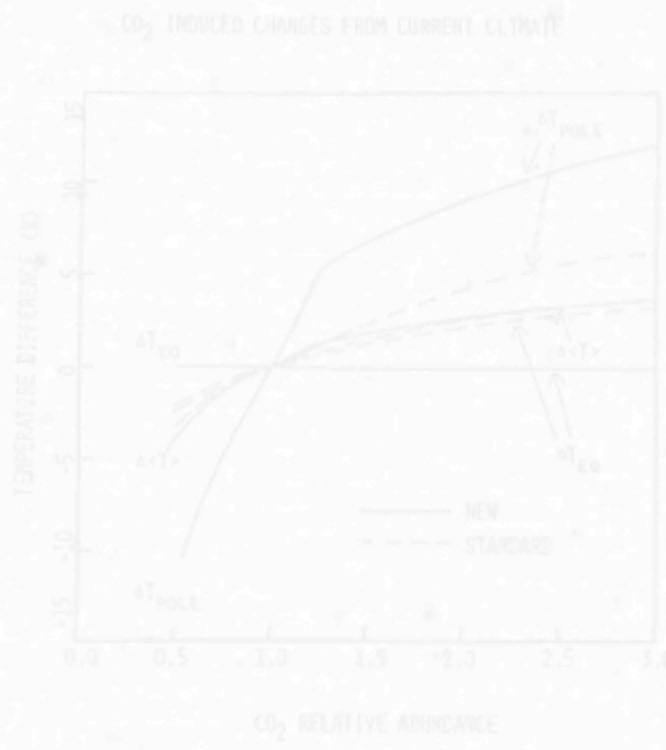
OBJECTIVE



"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

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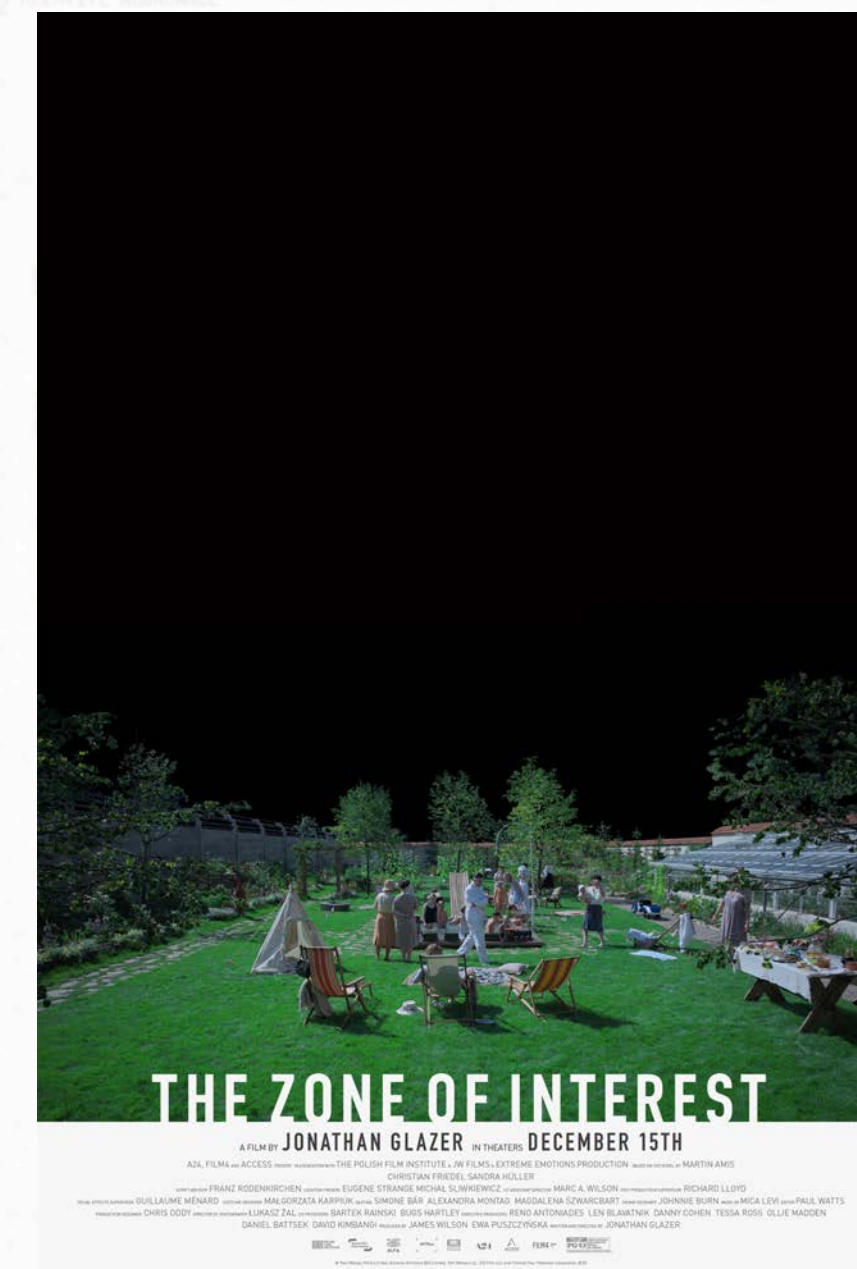
REFERENCE FILMS



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 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

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