

# *Just Earth: Films for a Sustainable Future*



Still from *Desynchronized*, directed by Olivia Leyva, 2021.

Photo by Real/Good Films

Postponed due to inclement weather: the screening will now take place on November 4.

This outdoor film screening presents work by established and emerging filmmakers that interweave the pressing concerns of climate change with racial, economic, ecological, and social justice.

Inspired by the major themes of the Smart Museum of Art's citywide exhibition *Toward Common Cause* as well as the social and racial justice movements sweeping the US and the world, the program includes films by University of Chicago student filmmakers Atman Mehta, Jode Sparks, and Andrei Thüler as

well as UChicago alumni Cameron Hu, Amy Tian, and Ellen Askey.

## Featuring

*Desynchronized* (Olivia Leyva and George Denison, 2021)

*This Extraordinary Rock* (LiCo (Cameron Hu, David Habets, & Stefan Schafer), 2020)

*I Can Only See Shadows* (Marissa Lee Benedict and David Rueter, 2016)

*Zhashagi, Echo Maker* (Steve Zieverink, 2015)

*Loss* (Atman Mehta, 2021)

*Alaskans in Chicago* (Jode Sparks, 2021)

*Globalized Consequences* (Amy Tian, 2021)

*Downstream* (Ellen Askey, 2021)

*P.E.T.s* (Andrei Thüler, 2020)

FREE, open to all. The films will be projected onto the façade of the Smart Museum. Please bring your own blanket or chair and set up on the grassy area between the Smart Museum and Henry Crown Field House.

This film program is co-presented by the Smart Museum of Art and Center for Leadership and Involvement at the University of Chicago in conjunction with *Toward Common Cause*.

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Rescheduled from October 28, due to inclement weather.

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# About the films

Olivia Leyva and George Denison

*Desynchronized*

2021

Recent studies show that insects are in decline across the globe and there may be a direct connection between the current climate crisis and these declining populations. *Desynchronized* focuses on Pope Canyon Queens, a beekeeping and queen breeding company in Northern California. Pope Canyon Queens is currently rebuilding after the 2020 LNU Lightning Complex fires that destroyed their farm, shop, and hives. Their crucial work to breed honey bee queens with stronger genes fortifies beekeepers' hives across the country while they face the effects of climate change and unregulated industries. Dr. Nicholas Teets, PhD Entomology, explains how shifts in phenology are predicted to cause bigger issues. Howard Goldstein, Senior Forest Ecologist at the *Prospect Park Alliance* explores how community gardens and green spaces in large metropolitan areas may help insect populations recover from loss of habitat and food scarcity.

Cameron Hu + LiCo

*This Extraordinary Rock*

2020

Developed for the “consultation room” of the exhibition *Lithium* at Rotterdam’s Het Nieuwe Instituut, *This Extraordinary Rock* sells its viewer an all-purpose cure for nervous disorder, difficulties of concentration, weakness of the will, systemic

economic volatility, civilizational malaise, and the heat death of the universe. “Our diagnosis is fundamental,” goes the pitch of an enigmatic Foundation, “and our solution is elemental. . . . a few protons, a few neutrons, and nothing more.”

Marissa Lee Benedict and David Rueter

*I Can Only See Shadows*

2016

*I Can Only See Shadows* is a three-channel video set in a troposphere awash in the byproducts of drilling, digging, fracking, cracking, and burning carbon-based fuels. Clouds of dusty molecules increasingly fill the air, irritating the nose and clogging particle filters: material records of energy histories.

Steve Zieverink

*Zhashagi, Echo Maker*

2015

*Zhashagi, The Echo Maker* is an indigenous human rights film exploring the right to water, the environmental impacts of mining and the lack of protection for sacred sites by the federal government. Focusing on the construction of Eagle Mine in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula along the shores of Lake Superior, *Echo Maker* tells the story of industry and the impact of choices upon the environment and peoples of the region. Rio Tinto Kennecott initially built the mine entrance on the Yellow Dog Plains at the sacred site called Migi zii wa sin (Eagle Rock), where the Anishinaabe peoples and many other cultures have held religious ceremonies for thousands of years. *Echo Maker* shares the voices of the Anishinaabe peoples from the shores of Lake Superior and the surrounding Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, and brings to light the stark contrast of viewpoint

between people and industry, not only in treatment of land and water, but also prioritization of resources and consideration of long term impacts upon future generations.

Atman Mehta

*Loss*

2021

A look at how a small, rural community in Alaska is battling to preserve its way of life, and its land.

Jode Sparks

*Alaskans in Chicago*

2021

For college-bound Alaskans, there is a 50% chance that they will leave the state at some point in their education. This micro-documentary sits down with four students who have found themselves living in Chicago while getting their degrees. While they are from a diverse range of academic backgrounds, the students have in common a point of origin as well as deep concerns about the effects of the changing climate on their home. Set against the backdrops of the Hyde Park neighborhood, this short film examines what it means to leave home without letting your home leave you.

Amy Tian

*Globalized Consequences*

2021

In the late 1960s, America was dangerously polluted from postwar manufacturing, resulting in frightening headlines such as the Cuyahoga River Fire, Santa Barbara oil disaster, and killer smog in LA. By the new century, the top twenty most



polluted cities are now across the world in Asia. What beckoned such rapid environmental transition across the world and what are its consequences? This found-footage documentary uses archival videos and photographs from steel and manufacturing communities to illustrate the impact of American deindustrialization and how pollution crises globalized from the US to Asia. Without any narration, the footage is edited and presented to demonstrate how a lack of corporate and government responsibility led to economic decline and resentment which later manifested in racial scapegoating and environmental racism.

Ellen Askey

*Downstream*

2021

*Downstream* traces the path of water from farms to lakeside economies. In Kankakee, IL, we follow a corn-belt farmer, Jeff, as he works to address the problem of nutrient runoff—keeping fertilizers out of waterways where they can lead to harmful algal blooms downstream. On the Ohio shore of Lake Erie, the endpoint of a neighboring watershed, we hear from a charter captain, shop owner, and restaurant owner, and see the domino effect of algal blooms on drinking water and their local economy. Meanwhile, Jeff strives to get other farmers to adopt the uncommon farming practices that can benefit both water quality and the farmers' bottom line.

Andrei Thüler

*P.E.T.s*

2020

Climate change is one of the most critical issues of our time,

and electricity generation is one of the leading causes of greenhouse gas production. In line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, we present a new, innovative, and renewable approach to electricity generation in high-density areas: piezoelectric transducers, or as we like to call them, “PETs.” These small discs transfer mechanical energy like sound and vibrations from footsteps into electricity. In other words, they harness otherwise wasted energy, generate electricity, and help reduce our carbon footprint in the process. In subway stations, passengers and trains could generate enough electricity to power signage and lighting. PETs could be also used in airports, schools, sports arenas, highways, and other high-density areas.

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#### **Attend**

**Just Earth: Films for a Sustainable Future**

**November 4, 2021 8:00-10:00pm**

#### **Address**

**Smart Museum of Art  
5550 S Greenwood Ave  
Chicago, Illinois 60637**

#### **Contact**

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