

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF FILM PRODUCTION

Dirt Cheap

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A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements

for a baccalaureate degree

in Film-Video

with honors in Film-Video

Electronic approvals on file

Reviewed and approved by the following:

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Honors Advisor & Thesis Supervisor

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Assistant Teaching Professor of Film Production

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## ABSTRACT

Through the last four years, my creative interest in film has lain firmly in traditional live-action narrative, so I always planned for my thesis film to follow in that same vein. But like everything else this year, those plans were easily derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. When last minute changes made it clear that production this spring wouldn't be possible, I had to re-route entirely. Luckily, the film program at Penn State has allowed for plenty of opportunities to continue learning and growing creatively for students without safe access to in-person collaboration, and my classes this year in post-production and experimental filmmaking gave me a start on the skills and interest necessary to re-imagine what my thesis film could look like.

In this year of isolation, it was a method of survival to find pleasure in simple things-- the simplest and greatest of which being the outdoors. Without anywhere else to go safely, I spent more time outside this year than ever. And with the rest of the world and my life at such an utter standstill, the change of the seasons became the main attraction. These changes did not only manifest themselves in color, light, and temperature, but in another simple, wonderful, thing: my family's dinner table. Watching the seasons shift in subtle and bombastic ways through the produce that appeared from our small garden and farmers market gave me something to love about being rooted exactly where I was, and it ignited a deeper love and appreciation for sustainable, local agriculture than I've ever had before. As the fall quieted to winter and our farm share hauls grew less frequent, I turned to reading.

Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Vegetable Miracle* is a primer on local agriculture and the nightmare of the mainstream food system, both of which I already was already somewhat familiar-- but what I was most struck by was her assertion of the crisis of identity that is posed by a globalized, processed food system: that not only is local food crucial to the health of our bodies and planet, but of our culture as well. Following the breadcrumbs of Kingsolver's bibliography, I found Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America*. A much older (but terrifyingly prescient) book, Berry goes further in detail on the philosophy of this inseparability of culture and agriculture, and the danger we pose to ourselves by crafting a world completely alienated from the production of what sustains us. It was these thoughts and ideas that became the core motivation of DIRT CHEAP, this small experimental short which celebrates the processes and people that keep us rooted.

My process for this short began with a deep dive into the public domain, sifting through the image databases like that of the Library of Congress, Smithsonian, and the Internet Archive. There are thousands of amazing photographs, illustrations, and posters waiting to be found and used freely-- I only wish I could have used more of them. Armed with assets cut out in Adobe Photoshop, I animated and assembled the final product using Adobe After Effects.

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## **ACADEMIC VITA**

### **A&E NETWORKS**

*Research and Development intern for food travel show "From Scratch"*

- Detailed research and coverage on locations, talent and key ingredients
- Assistance with writing, editing and formatting each episode's book

### **STARK WHITE ENTERTAINMENT**

*Development and Production Intern*

- Thorough coverage on potential talent, updated and organized contact databases
- Detailed note-taking in development meetings, podcast transcriptions

### **PARK SLOPE PRODUCTIONS**

*Development and Post-Production Intern*

- Extensive development research to find talent and potential new projects
- Transcribed hours of footage for The Discovery Channel's *Alaskan Bush People*

### **IES ABROAD, BUSINESS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

PARIS, FRANCE

- Focus on French language and art history, Spring 2019

### **PENN STATE ATHLETICS LIVE VIDEO**

*Live Video Intern*

- Assisted with the production of live sporting events
- Roles including camera operator, graphics operator, and clip playback

### **C-NET GOVERNMENT & EDUCATION ACCESS CABLE**

*Production Intern*

- Assisted staff producers with remote-shoot transportation, set-up and production
- Operated camera and audio for local government meetings and educational events

### **PENN STATE 48**

*Organizer*

- Helped Organize a team of students to launch Penn State's first 48-hour film festival
- Wrote budgets and successfully lobbied for grant money that made the festival possible