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GENESIS 2.0

A Film by Oscar® Nominated Director CHRISTIAN FREI

Co-Directed by **MAXIM ARBUGAEV**

Featuring

PETER GRIGORIEV SEMYON GRIGORIEV GEORGE CHURCH SPIRA SLEPTSOV WOO SUK HWANG

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LOGLINE

The hunt for white gold at the remotest edge of Siberia reveals a scenario of the future that may well turn our world upside down.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

On the remote New Siberian Islands in the Arctic Ocean, hunters search for tusks of extinct mammoths. One day, they discover a surprisingly well-preserved mammoth carcass. Resurrecting the woolly mammoth is a first manifestation of the next great technological revolution - genetics. It may well turn our world upside down.

LONG SYNOPSIS

The film observes the harsh and dangerous life of so-called mammoth hunters on the remote New Siberian Islands in the far north of Siberia. The archaic landscape in which these people are looking for the tusks of extinct mammoths looks like primordial earth. There is a kind of gold rush fever in the air, because the prices for this white gold have never been so high. But the thawing permafrost unveils more than just precious ivory. Sometimes the hunters find an almost completely preserved mammoth carcass with fur, liquid blood and muscle tissue on which arctic foxes gnaw.

Such finds are magnets for high-tech Russian and South Korean clone researchers in search of mammoth cells with the greatest possible degree of intact DNA. Their mission could be part of a science-fiction plot. They want to bring the extinct woolly mammoth back to life à la "Jurassic Park", and resurrect it as a species. And that's just the beginning. Worldwide, biologists are working on re-inventing life. They want to learn the language of nature and create life following the *Lego principle*¹². The goal of synthetic biology is to produce complete artificial biological systems. Man becomes the Creator.

The resurrection of the mammoth is a first track and manifestation of this next great technological revolution. An exercise. A multi-million dollar game. The new technology may well turn the world as we know it completely on its head...and all of this has its origin in the unstoppably thawing permafrost at the extreme edge of Siberia.

Genesis two point zero.

¹ The Lego Principle refers to the concept of connecting first to God and then to one another. Regardless of the shape, size, or color of any LEGO brick, each is designed to do just one thing: connect. LEGO pieces are designed to connect at the top with studs and the bottom with tubes. Following this metaphor, if you can connect to the top with God and to the foundation with others, you then have the ability to shape the world you live in.

² In the film, the Lego Principle also refers to: 1. BioBricks, used to design synthetic biological circuits; 2. The main award at the Genetically Engineered Machine competition (a huge Lego Brick); 3. The hunters joking around while one of them is putting together a Mammoth skelleton ("It's like Lego!")

"Olonkho - Eles Bootur"

At the beginning and the end of the film, a female voice is quoting a Yakutian epic tale called "Olonkho – Eles Bootur"

See here...See here...
Broad-shouldered you are!
But stupid you are.
Stout enough you are
but light-minded you are.
Fatuous and boasting you are!

But gazing at you I see ...no doubt... you look well indeed! You really came from Yakutia!

How did you manage to set free that terrible devil? Since when did he become your bosom friend?

It was too late to catch him. At the pass to a plentiful land. At the passage to a windy world. At the trampled down mouth of a bottomless abyss.

UNESCO declared *Olonkho* "a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity" in November 2005. The Yakut heroic epos *Olonkho* is on the federal list of 100 books recommended for extracurricular reading. *Olonkho* is an ancient epic tale of the Yakuts. *Olonkho* poems consist of 10,000 to 15,000 lines and are performed by story-tellers.

Ice Breaker: On Christian Frei's Genesis 2.0

Written by Livia Bloom Ingram

"Are you sure this is skin?" a man wonders, digging a greyish mass from the frozen tundra. He's part of a small party of prospectors combing the New Siberian Islands, a desolate wintry archipelago, in search of unblemished mammoth tusks buried beneath the snow. Rising global temperatures and melting permafrost increasingly expose the giant ivory bones to searchers such as the scrappy band profiled in Christian Frei's haunting film *Genesis 2.0* (2018). A large flawless tusk might fetch between \$45,000 and \$90,000—not nearly the million dollars it might command after it has been cleaned and carved into an ornate sculpture, but enough money to change the fortunes of one man and his family. Enough money to make him risk frigid waters, claustrophobic caves, and the bad luck predicted for those who disturb an ancient mammoth's remains. Enough money to make him put his life on the line.

But it's not a tusk that this man just might hold in his gloved hand, it's something rarer still: a piece of mammoth flesh, accompanied by a trickle of ancient black-red blood that spreads to stain the surrounding snow. And it's not the dream of a pricey piece of artwork that this find will inspire, but a genetically regenerated, living, breathing beast cloned from the frozen mammoth's DNA.

Genesis 2.0 finds Frei again working with cinematographer Peter Indergand, and adds a new collaborator: co-director Maxim Arbugaev, a young Yakutian filmmaker raised in the nearby Arctic port of Tiksi, who captures breathtaking footage on the New Siberian Islands. Together, they suffuse the film with luminous grey light and a palpable air of foreboding.

Their eerie visual style evokes Cormac McCarthy's post apocalyptic novel (and John Hillcoat's 2009 screen adaptation) *The Road*; it also harkens to journalistic traditions such as Sven Zellner's documentary on rogue Mongolian gold miners, *Price of Gold* (2012). Musically, Frei has previously collaborated with minimalist composers including Arvo Pärt and Steve Reich as well as jazz musicians like Jan Garbarek; for *Genesis 2.0*, Max Richter and Edward Artemyev's score adds a deeply melancholy, hypnotic atmosphere.

The geography of *Genesis 2.0* is not limited to the Arctic. Frei also brings viewers to the quirky Russian museum where a life-size mammoth figurine is carefully being vacuumed for visitors; the halls of a Synthetic Biology science conference in Boston where eager students work on genetic hybrids that just might save the world; China's National GeneBank, operated by the Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI), where genes are sequenced and "life becomes big data"; and the corporate campus of Sooam Biotech in South Korea, where scientists—who have already cloned hundreds of pets—take life into their own hands.

Over the course of the film, such disparate settings grow to comprise a map where humans—motivated by a poisonous blend of ambition, obsession, and desperation—are working determinedly to, as one scientist puts it, "make God perfect."

Ice Breaker: On Christian Frei's Genesis 2.0 (cont.)

Written by Livia Bloom Ingram

Frei's characters share their hubris in defying the laws of nature with an illustrious line of literary and cinematic forebearers, from Biblical parables and Greek myths to legends of contemporary cinema. Werner Herzog's menagerie of protagonists lead the pack; think of would-be Alaskan bear king Timothy Treadwell (*Grizzly Man*, 2005) or would-be Amazonian conquistador Lope de Aguirre (unforgettably embodied by the equally unhinged Klaus Kinski in *Aguirre*, the Wrath of God, 1972). At the same time, Genesis 2.0 adds a complex new chapter to Frei's own deeply thoughtful ongoing exploration of income inequality, rendered stark by high-stakes circumstance. In *Space Tourists* (2009), for example, he documents self-funded astronauts risking their lives (for science), alongside poor rocket detritus scavengers risking their lives (to earn a living). In *War Photographer* (2001), he profiles photojournalist James Nachtwey risking his life (to document the ravages of war), juxtaposed with Nachtwey's vulnerable, impoverished subjects, like one Indonesian family living between railway ties. To what lengths do the least fortunate among us go to support themselves and their children? To what lengths to do the most fortunate among us go to justify their privilege?

In each case, as in *Genesis 2.0*, Frei focuses his keen eye on the bounds of the possible, the reasonable, the safe and the sane. Those pushing at the limits are smart and brave, but there's a profoundly ominous undercurrent at play. When the man wonders whether he's found mammoth skin, we can only hope he's wrong.







FILMMAKER'S NOTES by Christian Frei

(Director, Producer, and Editor)

Ever since its existence mankind has alternated between two strategies. We vacillate between reason and legend, rationale and demonization, logos and myth. Things get interesting when we are faced with something new, something for which we have no rule of thumb, something that we don't comprehend. The consequence is curiosity or resistance, the desire to understand or fear.

Genesis 2.0 takes the viewer into an unknown and exotic world, one that has little in common with our own daily life. This makes for a great cinematic experience. For a while we have no idea what these men are looking for. We don't know what drives them or who they are. Slowly we realize that they are in a kind of gold rush. We learn about their dreams, hopes and fears while we see the mundane reality and the struggle for survival.

But once we find our bearings and feel a little more comfortable we are thrown into an even more unknown, even more exotic world. All of a sudden these cloning folks enter the picture. Eventually we learn of their plans with the mammoth. And again we alternate between curiosity and resistance, between wanting to understand and wanting to demonize.

This is the central idea behind this film.

The film lures the viewers into an archaic world and then surprises them with a subject of the future. It deals with legends, myths and taboos and confronts us with our own fear of an unknown future. In an interesting way it invites us to get to know and to understand what are seemingly incompatible realms of thought, behavior and assessment.

All the while the film follows the mammoth and the people that are somehow connected to it. Their hopes, conflicts and hardships drive the film. It is not the film's aspiration to dissect the future technology 'Synthetic Biology' or to explain it in its entire complexity. It aspires to create interesting cinematic encounters with very different people, with the mammoth as the common denominator. In the end it wants to tell a story about our past, present and future—an entertaining and surprising story that inspires us to want to understand the new and unknown.

The film treats all protagonist with the same respect, regardless of their visions and goals, even when their plans and intentions seem absurd and scary or too Science Fiction. The film approaches everything with a curious skepticism. It asks questions and doesn't condemn. It tries to comprehend the new and the strange without being gullible. Utopia and dystopia, curiosity and skepticism—these are the main conflicts of our film. And its main drive.

FILMMAKER'S NOTES by Maxim Arbugaev

(Co-director and Cinematographer New Siberian Islands)

When I came for the first time to the Islands with my sister Evgenia, I was 21 years old. During 15 years of my young life, I was playing professional ice hockey. Very intensively. When I came to the Islands, I just finished with my sports career. Something very important had changed inside me. And when we finally left the Islands, I was a different human being. The energy on the Islands has something catalytic.

Whilst shooting on the Islands, I become part of the mammoth hunters "family". Together we travel from North to South, in our "treasure" search and passing hundreds of kilometers in the vastness of the endless tundra. I live with the hunters as an equal. I am so happy to feel the respect of these men. They have welcomed me in their closed community. And I hope it shows in my footage how much I am accepted.

This is such a remote place. One of the things I immensely enjoy is the notion of being cut-off from civilization. I am feeling like in the books I read about the first explorers of New Siberian archipelago centuries ago. They had no communication with the rest of the world for long time... for months and sometimes years. This is not so much different today. Kesha, the head of the hunters group, is using a sat phone. And I have one just for emergencies. The hunters are allowed to call their families only in extremely rare occasions. They may use these treasured minutes only for important occasions, like birthdays or other not-to-be-missed family days. And the conversation may only last 4-5 minutes. Just enough to say that they are alive and all is good. These minutes are so precious! Somehow, the Islands are still cut off from the outside world.

The remoteness of the Islands is expressed through the difficulties I am facing to connect with Christian. My old Iridium sat phone does not allow me to connect to the Internet easily. We are exchanging sort of letters, which are being read in a voice-over. Christian and I share our thoughts and feelings. I tell what the Islands do with me. Christian tells what visits to the labs do with him. We both agree that we use only as little voice-over as necessary and that the film remains mainly purely observational.

Hunters are the native people of the North, who practice shamanism and believe in spirits of nature. They are very careful and superstitious in their approach to these uninhabited islands. They are only guests here, spirits are always watching them. The land can be kind to them and let them find the tusks one day, and the next it can be brutal and destroy them. They realize their vulnerability and they are fearful to do the wrong step. We see the Arctic as a leaving creature of its own with mighty incomprehensible powers.

Before the "tusk rush" these people and their ancestors were hunters and fishermen. Tusk hunters have been brought up in a culture where you are allowed to kill animals only in the amount you need to feed your family; otherwise the spirits will avenge you for the greed.

This philosophy is now applied to the mammoth tusk hunt. Spira, one of our protagonists, lost his friend on the Islands. His friend died here 4 years ago. Spira says in his interview: "When I feel that I gathered enough tusks, I stop. I know that I have to pay the price for every tusk, maybe not now, but when I come back home, you never know when it will hit you. Sometimes the price of the tusk is a human life. Sometimes you pay for the tusks with your blood."

PROTAGONISTS' BIOS

(in order of appearance)



Peter Grigoriev

Born and raised in the Siberian Republic of Yakutia, Peter Grigoriev grew up in Kazachye, a small village mainly inhabited by mammoth tusk hunters. After attending the History and Law faculty of the Yakutian State University for some time he turned into a professional mammoth tusk hunter. For years now, he is experiencing the challenges of the quest for the white gold on all four islands of the New Siberian Archipelago.



Semyon Grigoriev

Peter's brother Semyon Grigoriev is an Indiana Jones-like paleontologist and head of the Mammoth Museum at the North Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk. The Yakutian permafrost is a huge evolutionary fridge. In the cool stores of the laboratories of his museum, he pursues the resurrection of the woolly mammoth, joined by his wife and researcher Lena Grigorieva.



George Church

American geneticist George Church, professor at Harvard Medical School, had an epiphany determining his career path when he attended the International World's Fair at the age of ten. Fascinated by science and engineering he wants to create the future. He dedicates his life to research and is one of the sanguine visionaries in the field of synthetic biology.



Spira Sleptsov

Born in the small Russian village of Tumat, behind the Arctic Circle, Spira Sleptsov had to leave the village due to unemployment. After arriving in Pokrovsk City, the father of two kids found work as a stoker in a cogeneration plant. Following the call of his former classmate Vlad in spring 2015 and encouraged by his father, he dared to join the mammoth tusk hunters. Facing the harsh conditions of the remote New Siberian Islands for the first time in his life.



Woo Suk Hwang

Korea-born Woo Suk Hwang became a national hero in 2005 and shortly after experienced a ruthless downfall in his career when his stem cell research was deemed as fraud. Imperturbable and with help from supporters, he cleared all widespread beliefs of the end of his career by launching Sooam Biotech. To date Sooam cloned over 900 dogs and is the only commercial animal cloning factory of such a scale worldwide

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS

Christian Frei (Director, Producer and Editor)

Swiss director and producer Christian Frei is considered one of today's most innovative and compelling documentary filmmakers. He was nominated for an Academy Award with *War Photographer* (2001) and won the World Cinema Directing Award at Sundance with *Space Tourists* (2009). For his latest endeavor he reached out to Siberian filmmaker Maxim Arbugaev.

Maxim Arbugaev (Co-director and Cinematographer New Siberian Islands)

Born in 1991 in Tiksi, on the shoreline of the Arctic Ocean, Russian director and cinematographer Maxim Arbugaev grew up to be a professional ice hockey player. Discovering his passion for filmmaking in the solitude of the New Siberian Islands, he currently studies documentary filmmaking at The Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography in Moscow. His directorial debut *The Hunters* (2014) earned several awards.

Peter Indergand (Cinematographer)

The films of director Christian Frei have played a significant role in Peter Indergand's career. The renowned Swiss cinematographer received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Cinematography for Frei's War Photographer (2001). The team continued working together with The Giant Buddhas (2005), Space Tourists (2009) and Sleepless in New York (2014). Indergand's work includes collaboration with directors such as Markus Imhoof, Marcel Gisler, Christoph Schaub and many others.

Thomas Bachmann (Editor)

Swiss editor Thomas Bachmann contributed to several short and feature length films, fiction and documentary, including the Academy Award nominated short *On the Line* (2007). The documentary *Electroboy* (2014) captivating with its provoking editing, earned him the Swiss Film Award for Best Editing. Bachmann's work includes collaboration with directors such as Markus Imhoof, Marcel Gisler and Reto Caffi among many others.







Produced and Directed by

CHRISTIAN FREI

Co-Director and Cinematographer New Siberian Islands

MAXIM ARBUGAEV

Co-Producers

MARTIN PIEPER ZDF/ARTE
URS AUGSTBURGER SWISS NATIONAL TELEVISION SRF
SILVANA BEZZOLA SWISS NATIONAL TELEVISION RSI

Additional Cinematographer and Assistant Director New Siberian Islands

VLADIMIR EGOROV

Cinematographer Boston, Yakutsk, Seoul, Shenzhen **PETER INDERGAND scs**

Music by

MAX RICHTER EDWARD ARTEMYEV

Editors

THOMAS BACHMANN CHRISTIAN FREI

Color Grading

PATRICK LINDENMAIER

Sound Recordist

DIETER MEYER

Sound Design and Sound Mix

FLORIAN EIDENBENZ

Line Producer Russia

THOMAS FERENC SCHMIDT

Editing Assistant

MARIA ULMANN

Assistant Director and Postproduction Coordinator

CHRISTINA KERBER

LOGLINE (DE)

Die Suche nach Weissem Gold am Rande Sibiriens offenbart ein Zukunftsszenario, das unsere Welt auf den Kopf stellen könnte.

SYNOPSIS (DE)

Der Film beobachtet den harschen und gefährlichen Alltag von sogenannten Mammutjägern auf einer extrem abgelegenen Inselgruppe im hohen Norden Sibiriens. Die archaische Landschaft, in der diese Menschen nach Stosszähnen längst ausgestorbener Mammuts suchen, erinnert an die Urzeit der Erde. Es herrscht eine Art Goldrauschstimmung, denn die Preise für das weisse Gold sind so hoch wie noch nie. Doch der auftauende Permafrost gibt nicht nur wertvolles Elfenbein frei. Manchmal finden die Jäger auch ein fast vollständig erhaltenes Mammutkadaver mit Fell und Muskelgewebe, an dem Polarfüchse nagen.

Solche Funde rufen hochtechnisierte amerikanische und südkoreanische Klonforscher auf der Suche nach Mammutzellen mit möglichst intakter DNA auf den Plan. Ihre Mission könnte Teil eines Science-Fiction Plots sein. Sie wollen das ausgestorbene Wollhaarmammut nach Jurassic-Park-Manier wieder zum Leben erwecken und auferstehen lassen. Und das ist nur der Anfang. Weltweit sind Biologen daran, das Leben neu zu erfinden. Sie wollen die Sprache der Natur lernen und Leben erschaffen nach dem Lego-Prinzip. Das Ziel der synthetischen Biologie ist es, komplette künstliche biologische Systeme zu erzeugen. Der Mensch wird zum Schöpfer.

Die Auferstehung des Mammuts ist eine erste Manifestation dieser nächsten großen technologischen Revolution. Eine Übung. Ein millionenschweres Spiel. Die neue Technologie wird die Welt, wie wir sie kennen, komplett auf den Kopf stellen... und all dies nimmt seinen Anfang im unaufhaltsam auftauenden Permafrost am äussersten Rand von Sibirien.

Genesis Zwei Punkt Null.

SYNOPSIS (FR)

Le film observe le rude et dangereux quotidien de soi-disant chasseurs de mammouths dans un archipel lointain, à l'extrême Nord de la Sibérie. Le paysage archaïque dans lequel évoluent ces hommes à la recherche de défenses de mammouths évoque la nuit des temps. Il y règne une atmosphère de chercheurs d'or, le prix de l'or blanc culminant à des sommets jamais atteints. Mais ce n'est pas uniquement cet ivoire précieux que la fonte du permafrost libère. Il arrive que les chasseurs découvrent le cadavre d'un mammouth presque intégralement conservé avec pelage et tissu musculaire, que le renard bleu ronge.

Le film brosse le portrait de chercheurs en clonage américains et sud-coréens hautement technicisés dans leur quête de cellules souches de mammouths à l'ADN aussi intact que possible. Leur mission pourrait faire partie d'une intrigue de science-fiction. Leur but est de faire renaître, de ressusciter le mammouth laineux à la façon de Jurassic Parc. Et ce n'est que le commencement. Dans le monde entier, des biologistes s'activent pour réinventer la vie. Ils veulent apprendre le langage de la nature et créer la vie selon le principe du Lego. L'objectif poursuivi par la biologie de synthèse est de fabriquer de complets systèmes biologiques artificiels. L'homme devient Créateur.

La résurrection du mammouth constitue la première manifestation de cette révolution technologique prochaine. Un exercice. Un jeu qui se chiffre en millions. Cette nouvelle technologie mettra le monde, tel que nous le connaissons, sens dessus dessous... et tout cela voit le jour dans l'irrémédiable fonte du permafrost au fin fond de la Sibérie.

La Genèse deux point zéro.

Mammoth Hunters and Synthetic Biology Collide in *Genesis 2.0* Documentary to World Premiere at 2018 Sundance Film Festival

Co-Directed by Academy-Nominated Christian Frei and Newcomer Maxim Arbugaev Genesis 2.0 Marks Frei's Third Film to Premiere in World Cinema Documentary Competition

November 29, 2017 (Los Angeles, CA) — *Genesis 2.0*, produced and directed by Christian Frei and co-directed by Maxim Arbugaev, will world premiere in the World Cinema Documentary Competition section at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival. The Sundance Film Festival takes place January 18-28 with screenings in Park City, Salt Lake City and at Sundance Mountain Resort, Utah.

"Genesis 2.0 deals with legends, myths and taboos and confronts us with our own fear of an unknown future," shares co-director Christian Frei. "In an interesting way it invites us to get to know and to understand what are seemingly incompatible realms of thought, behavior and assessment.

Filmed between the remote New Siberian Islands of the Arctic and some of the world's most cutting edge synthetic biology labs, *Genesis 2.0* introduces audiences to hunters searching for the tusks of extinct mammoths. Upon discovering a surprisingly well-preserved mammoth carcass, they set in-motion a scenario for the next great technological revolution in genetics that may well turn our world upside down.

"Hunters are the native people of the North, who practice shamanism and believe in spirits of nature. They are very careful and superstitious in their approach to these uninhabited islands," says Yakutian filmmaker Maxim Arbugaev. "We see the Arctic as a living creature of its own with mighty incomprehensible powers."

Swiss director and producer Christian Frei is considered one of today's most innovative and compelling documentary filmmakers. He was nominated for an Academy Award with *War Photographer* (2001) and won the World Cinema Directing Award at the Sundance Film Festival with *Space Tourists* (2009).

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For more information about *Genesis 2.0*, visit: https://www.genesis-two-point-zero.com.

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FESTIVALS and AWARDS

Park City (USA), 34. Sundance Film Festival

Competition

World Cinema Documentary Award for Cinematography 2018

Moscow, 40th Moscow International Film Festival

Competition

Winner Audience Award 2018

Torino, CinemAmbiente 2018

Best Documentary

Seoul Eco Film Festival

Green Competition Section

Best Feature Film in International Competition

San Francisco (USA), Green Film Festival

Green Film Network Award

Chukotka (Russland), Internationales Arktik Festival

Golden Raven Award

Docutah International Film Festival

Best Foreign Film

Lunenburg Doc Fest

Feature Documentary Award

Nyon, 24e Visions du Réel Festival international de cinéma Nyon

Competition

Sarasota (USA), Sarasota International Film Festival

München, 33. DOK.fest Internationales Dokumentarfilmfestival München

Competition

Warsaw, 15th Millenium Docs Against Gravity Film Festival Competition

Barcelona, Docs Barcelona International Film Festival

Official Section Panorama

Tel Aviv, 20th Docaviv International Documentary Film Festival Tel Aviv

Wellington (New Zealand), DocEdge

Sydney, 65th Sydney Film Festival

Competition

Bukarest, Pelicam International Film Festival

Utah, Doc Utah

Kells, Co. Meath (Ireland), Guth Gafa International Film Festival

Prizren (Kosovo), Doku Fest Prizren

Patmos/Paros (Greece), Aegan Film Festival

Canberra (Australia), Stronger than Fiction Documentary Festival

Locarno, Festival del Film

Panorama Suisse