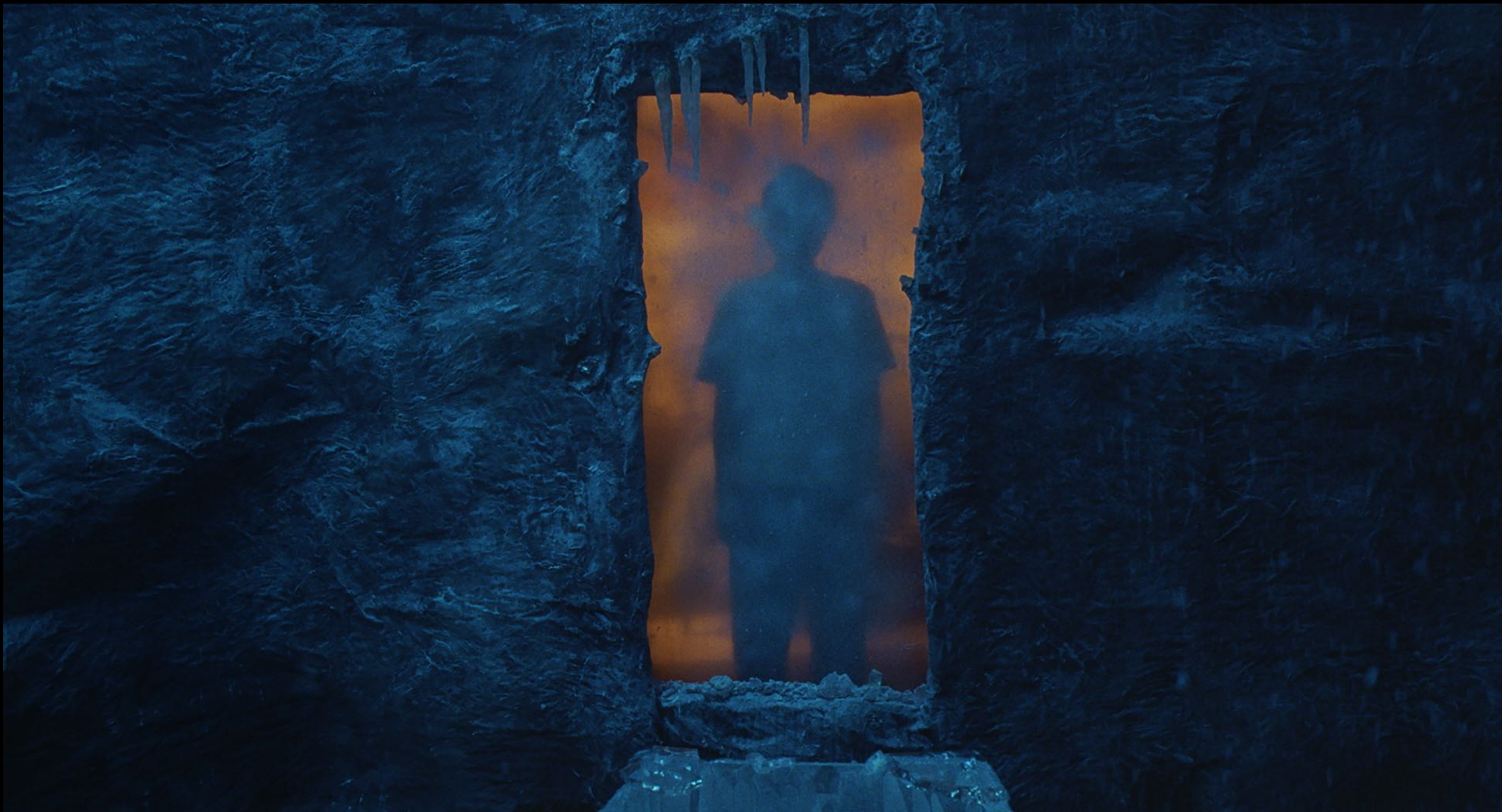




SKIN

Written/ Directed/ Cinematography by Leo Behrens



A STUDENT ACADEMY® AWARDS GOLD WINNER 2023

Starring

Lio Mehiel

Hair & Make Up

Shy Elizabeth

Writer/Director/Cinematographer

Leo Behrens

Colorist

Walter Volpatto

Producer

Ilayda Cetinkaya

Composer

Mike Forst

Production Designer

Mojo Wen

Editor

Alejandra Armijo



2023 || 07:00 MIN || USA || NARRATIVE SHORT

GENRE

LGBTQ, Magical Realism

THEME

Identity, self-discovery, reconciliation, transformation

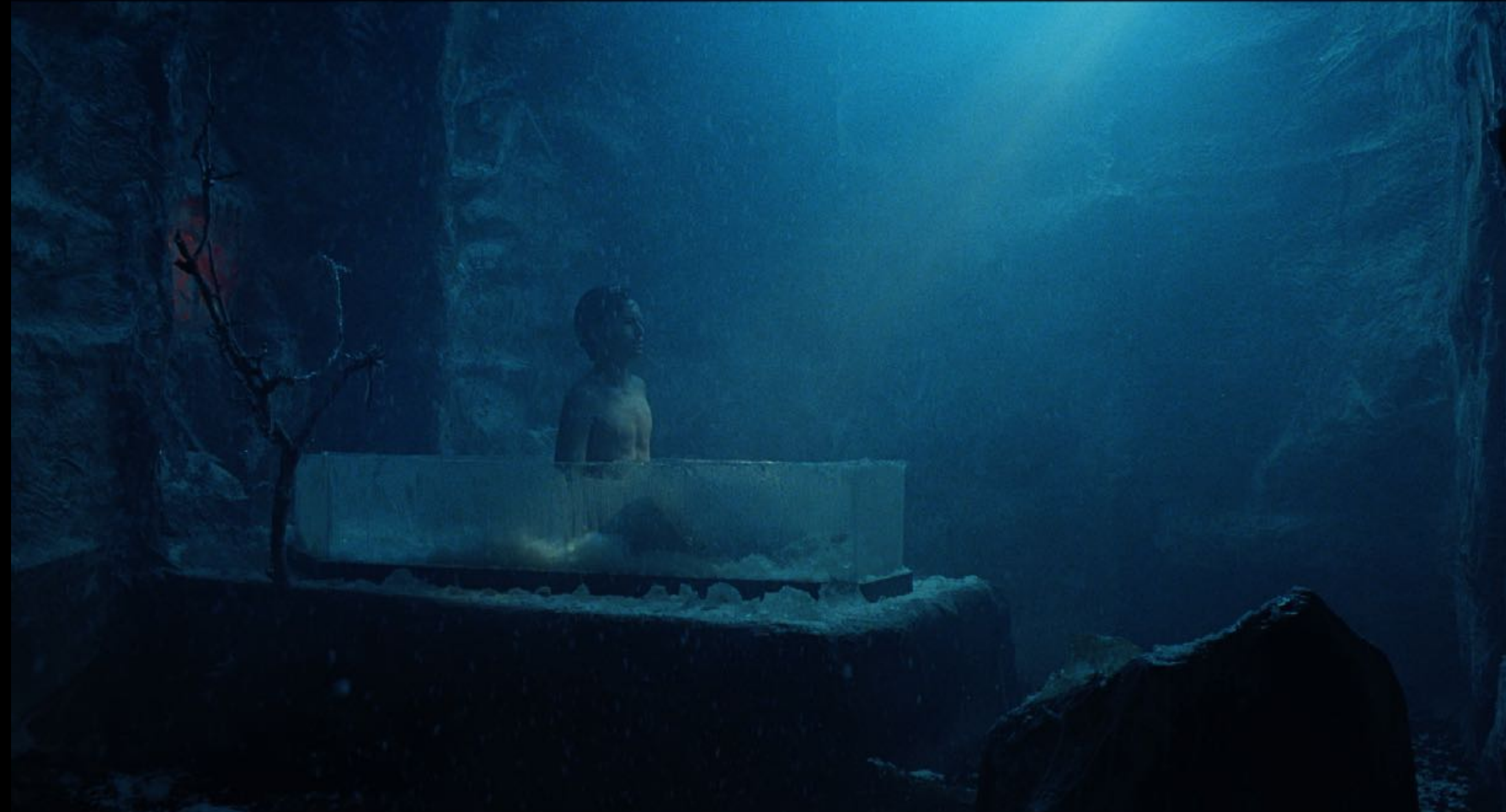
LOGLINE

"Skin is a poetic exploration of identity and self-discovery, using visual symbolism to depict a woman's transformation into a man. With the help of her inner manifestation, the ice man, she sheds her old skin and embraces her true identity".

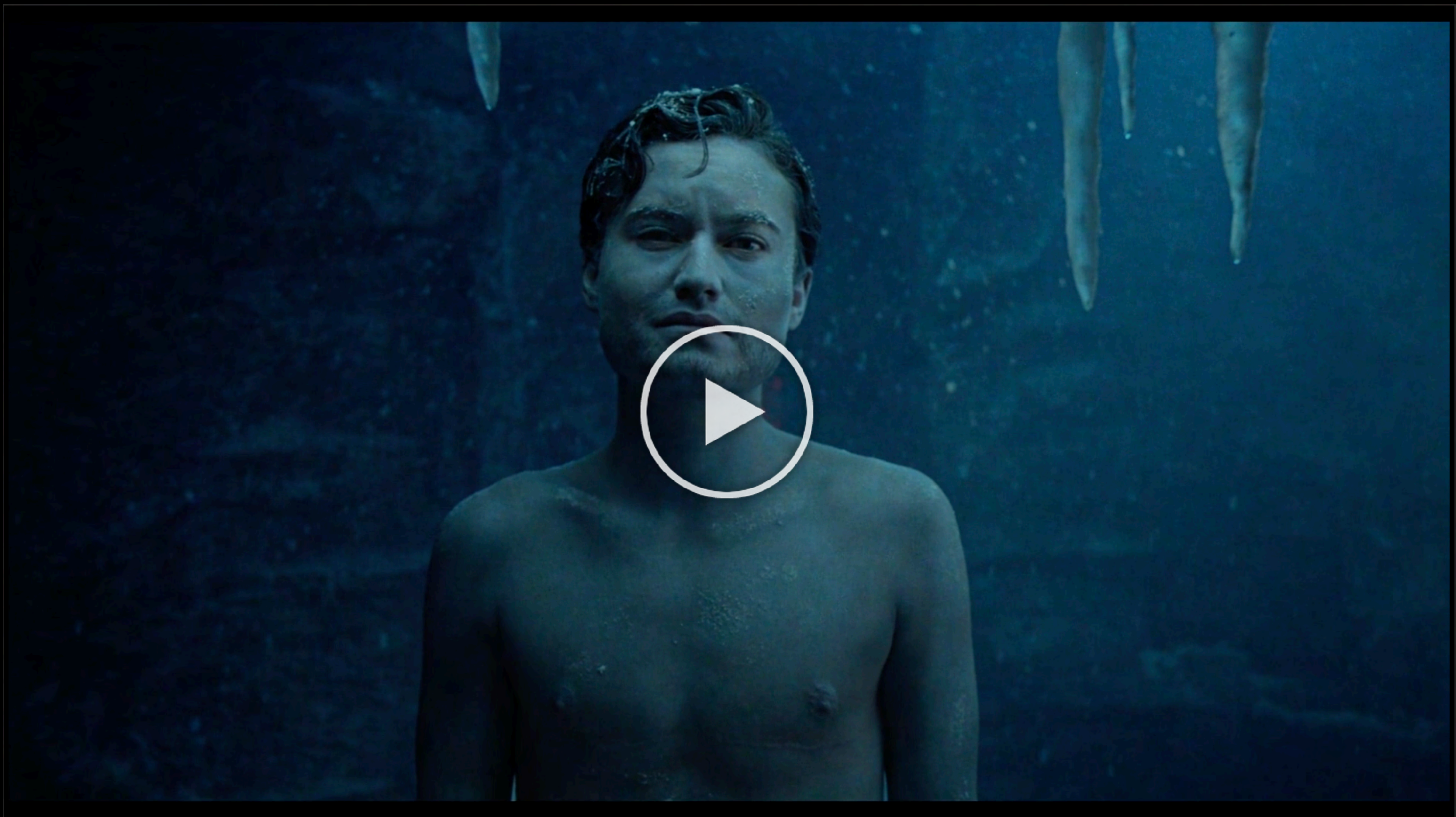
SYNOPSIS

A woman wakes up, noticing her facial skin is peeling off. In fear, she walks up to a mirror to take a look. Simultaneously, in a world on the other side of the mirror, a man covered in ice and snow, wakes up. "The ice man" represents a part of her identity she has neglected. He reaches out to her through the mirror to assist her transformation. As her old skin sheds, a new identity emerges.

STILLS



TRAILER



SCREENINGS

Student Academy Awards, 2023

October 21st Samuel Goldwyn Theater 2023

Student Academy Awards Ceremony Samuel Goldwyn Theater 2023

Festivals

AFI FEST, Live Action Short Competition, Chinese Theater, Oct 26th 2023

Guadalajara Film Festival, Downtown LA, Nov 3rd 2023

Download high quality images, trailer and poster here



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In 2011, I embarked on a personal journey, transitioning from female to male. From a young age, I expressed myself as male, but as my body changed, I tried to conform to societal expectations. This internal conflict became increasingly burdensome, leading me to realize that my inner and outer worlds were not in harmony. My transition inspired "Skin", and as I started developing the story, I wanted to explore gender transformation creatively. Transitioning is a deeply personal process, requiring self-examination from various angles. I used symbolism and an abstract approach to depict this inner emotional journey. While "Skin" may be seen as experimental, it follows a linear narrative. The female character undergoes an awakening, confronting her neglected identity by facing herself (the ice man). As a result, she sheds her old self to embrace her true identity.

I believe the themes in "Skin" speak a universal language. Personal transformation is a shared human experience. By being more self-aware, we can navigate these stages more empathetically. The film will resonate with most individuals, regardless of gender identity or orientation. It portrays the transformative journey of shedding one's old skin and embracing a new identity, a narrative relatable to anyone.

As a transgender filmmaker, I hope to increase LGBTQIA+ representation in media by creating content that resonates widely to encourage understanding and appreciation for diversity. As a Director and Cinematographer, my craft is a tool to lead viewers through a journey of discovery and contemplation by provoking emotions. I aim to capture authenticity and often shining a light on topics that are commonly overlooked or avoided. Ultimately, I seek to promote greater understanding and appreciation for the richness of human experiences in all their forms, beyond any specific identity or community.



SKIN FACT SHEET

Runtime: 7 min

Shot on: Arriflex 435 Extreme - 35mm, 4-Perf

Lenses: Cooke s/4

Film stock: Kodak 5213 200T

Aspect Ratio: 1:85:1

Film stock sponsored by Kodak

Film scan: FotoKem

Shooting dates; March 3rd - 5th, (2.5 days) in 2023

Location: The American Film Institute's Sound Stage in Los Angeles, California

Camera, grip and lighting equipment were provided by AFI

Additional funds provided by Leo Behrens

Date of completion, June 1st 2023

ACTOR: LIO MEHIEL

(They/He)

Lio Mehiel is a Puerto Rican and Greek actor, artist, and filmmaker. Their work explores the inherent contradiction of the trans experience – simultaneously rooted in the body while also transcending beyond it.

Lio began their career as a professional salsa dancer and child actor on Broadway. They can now be seen on shows like WeCrashed (Apple+) and Tales of the City (Netflix). They made their feature film debut as the lead role in Mutt, which premiered at Sundance Film Festival 2023. Lio won the Jury Award for Best Actor at the prestigious festival.



WRITER/DIRECTOR/CINEMATOGRAPHER: LEO BEHRENS

(He/Him)

Leo Behrens is a Norwegian trans cinematographer & director, based in Los Angeles. In 2023, Leo earned his cinematography degree from the American Film Institute Conservatory. Shortly after his graduation, he was selected for The ASC Vision Mentorship Program 23-24.

He graduated from Westerdals Film & TV in 2010. Following graduation, he started working as a camera operator and director. A few years later, he progressed to become a cinematographer, contributing to numerous documentaries, music videos, short films, TV series, and reality TV shows in Norway..

Leo's short film "SKIN" won the Gold Medal in the alternative/experimental category at the 2023 Student Academy Awards, where he served as the writer, director, and cinematographer. His recent cinematography contributions to the documentary "Evan Ever After" earned it the Audience Award for "Best Florida Short" in 2023 and gained recognition at notable film festivals, including, Outfest Los Angeles, InsideOut Film Festival Toronto, NorthwestFest, NewFest New York, and Out On Film Atlanta., ++ many more.



PRODUCER: ILAYDA CETINKAYA

(She/Her)

Ilayda Cetinkaya is an award-winning producer whose 35mm short film "SKIN" won the 2023 Student Academy Gold Medal. She's a recent MFA graduate from the AFI Conservatory's Producing Fellowship, where her thesis film was awarded a grant from Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

She has gained invaluable industry experience through internships with award-winning director Oran Zegman, Amazon's longtime Development Executive Steven Prinz's company Borderless Pictures, Riverside Entertainment, and Alma Har'el's JELLYWOLF & ZUSA Pictures. Her music video, "Por Una Cabeza," garnered significant attention, reached over 150K views on YouTube, and earned selections at the 2020 Los Angeles and Melbourne Lift-Off Film Festivals

Originally from Turkey, she pursued her passion for filmmaking by moving to the United States at the age of seventeen. She began her journey at Idyllwild Arts Academy and completed her BFA in Film Production at Chapman University.



PRODUCTION DESIGNER: MOJO WEN

(She/Her)

Mojo Wen is a seasoned filmmaker with a decade-long experience in storytelling. Mojo's exceptional talent has been recognized in various prestigious film festivals, including the Student Academy Awards, Palm Springs International Short Film Festival, The Telly Awards, and LA Shorts, among others.

With degrees in Animation and Film Production, she enhanced her skills by pursuing a Master's degree in Production Design at the AFI Conservatory.

Her mastery lies in crafting compelling narratives through production design, encompassing shot composition, prop selection, and set design. Proficient in art direction, editing, and visual effects, Mojo offers invaluable creative insights to filmmaking endeavors.



THE MAKING OF SKIN

Art & Production Design



Capturing the essence of the ice world on paper was a straightforward task, but the true challenge laid in translating the vision into reality. During development, extensive research was conducted to identify suitable materials for replicating the look and feel of ice and snow, ensuring that execution was feasible.

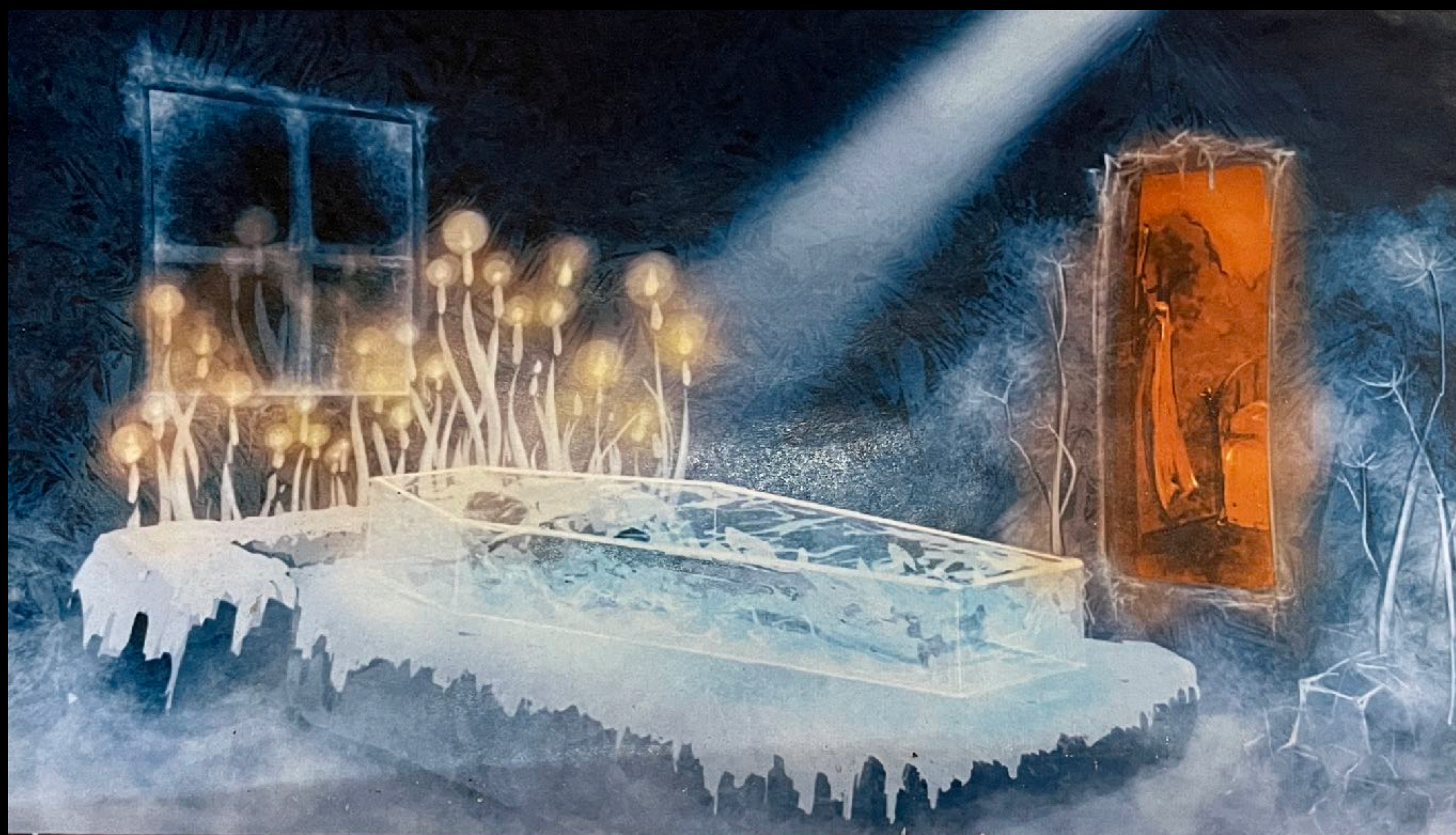
Leo and Mojo collaborated closely to experiment with various materials that could effectively mimic the appearance of ice. They delved into a diverse array of substances, each serving a distinct purpose in bringing their frozen world to life.

Materials such as clay were utilized to mold intricate icicle shapes, while wax, encapsulation, and resin played pivotal roles in achieving different visual effects for various shots. Precise mixing, adhering to specific ratios, and allowing ample time for these materials to assume the desired forms and textures were essential components of the creative process.

The angle of light was also an important factor, as well as the amount of water to create the right texture and make it feel real.

THE MAKING OF SKIN

Art & Production Design



We had many decisions to make while building our set, each requiring careful consideration. These choices ranged from the color of the wallpaper to the exposed brick walls, materials' aging, the dimensions of the set, spacing between walls, the ice case's placement, mirror size, bed-to-ice case distance, and camera equipment, like the dolly and crane, fitting into the scene. Our ice world set was mainly made of chicken wire, wood, paper mache, and paint. We added wax and ice elements for the final touches, which took weeks to complete.

Since we were using 35mm film, we had to get the distances just right to avoid wasting film. Leo (Dir/DP) had to ensure consistent distances between the characters on each side of the wall. This was especially important since Lio Mehiel played both characters, with a body double. We shot each side of the mirror on different days, making it crucial to maintain the same distances and use the right lens focal length for a consistent look.

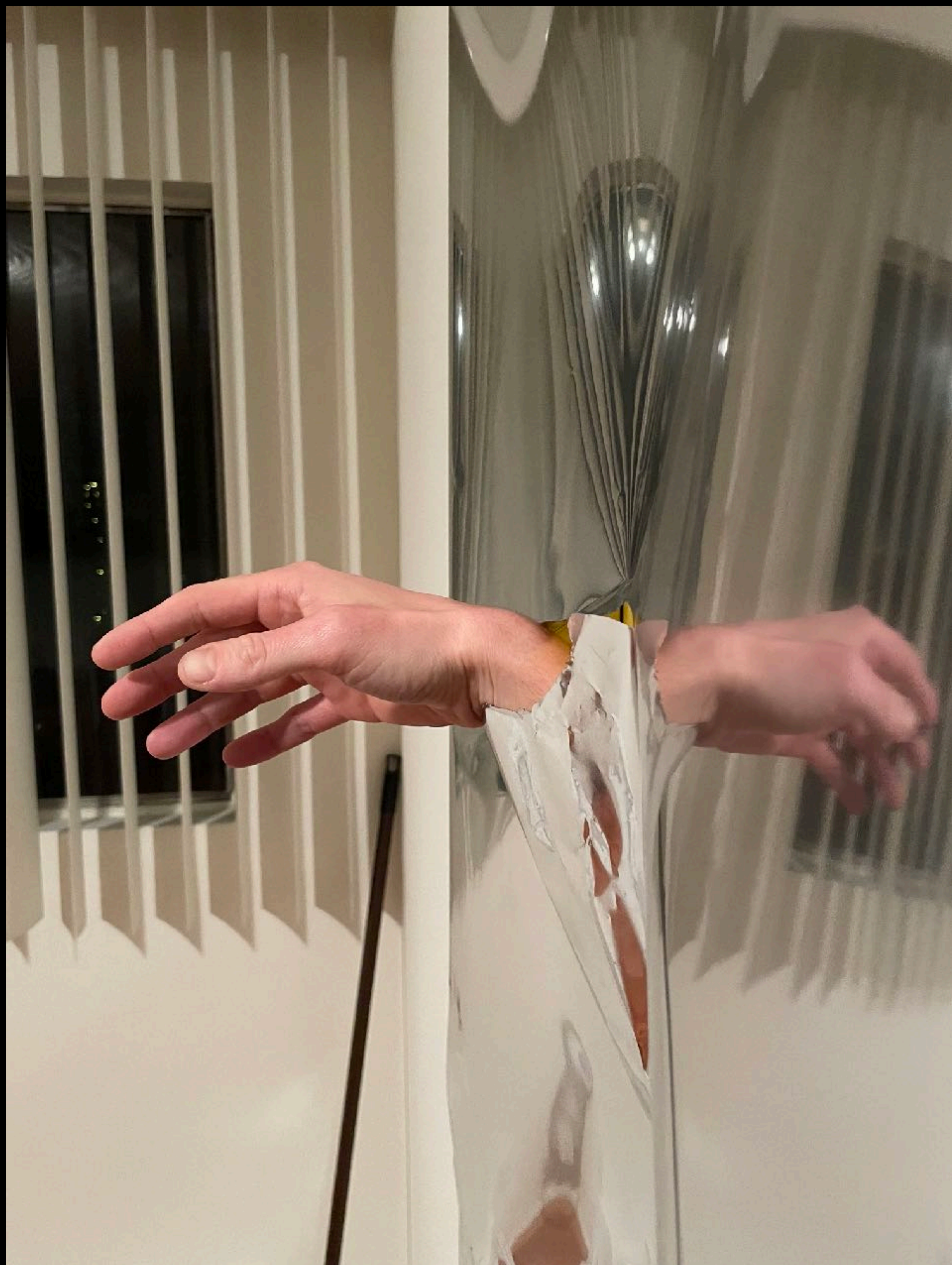


THE MAKING OF SKIN

SFX Make Up & VFX

The makeup and artificial skin played a crucial role in the film, especially during its climactic moments. Before committing to this idea, Leo had a conversation with our makeup artist, Shy, to determine if it was feasible to create realistic-looking fake skin. After several makeup tests, they settled on using latex.

They conducted multiple tests to observe how the latex skin held up over time, including when it was peeled and under different lighting conditions. Their goal was to make it as convincing as possible. Leo carefully planned the placement of lighting and used a classic soft filter, combined with the slight softness of film, to achieve skin that came close to looking real.



In the film, there are two VFX shots: the mirror shot and the hand touching the glass from the ice world side. Initially, Leo planned to handle a significant portion of the mirror shots with VFX. However, due to time and budget constraints, he had to rethink his approach. Their VFX artist, Ryan, suggested researching mylar material. Leo purchased a roll and conducted tests at home, discovering that it produced a more intriguing effect. After the shoot, the VFX artist refined the effect, focusing on the opening of the hole and the arm, resulting in a more believable outcome.

BEHIND THE SCENES



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