RESEARCH OPEN HOUSE

2021

STUCKEMANSCHOOL

Architecture
Landscape Architecture
Graphic Design

WHITE AFTER DARK
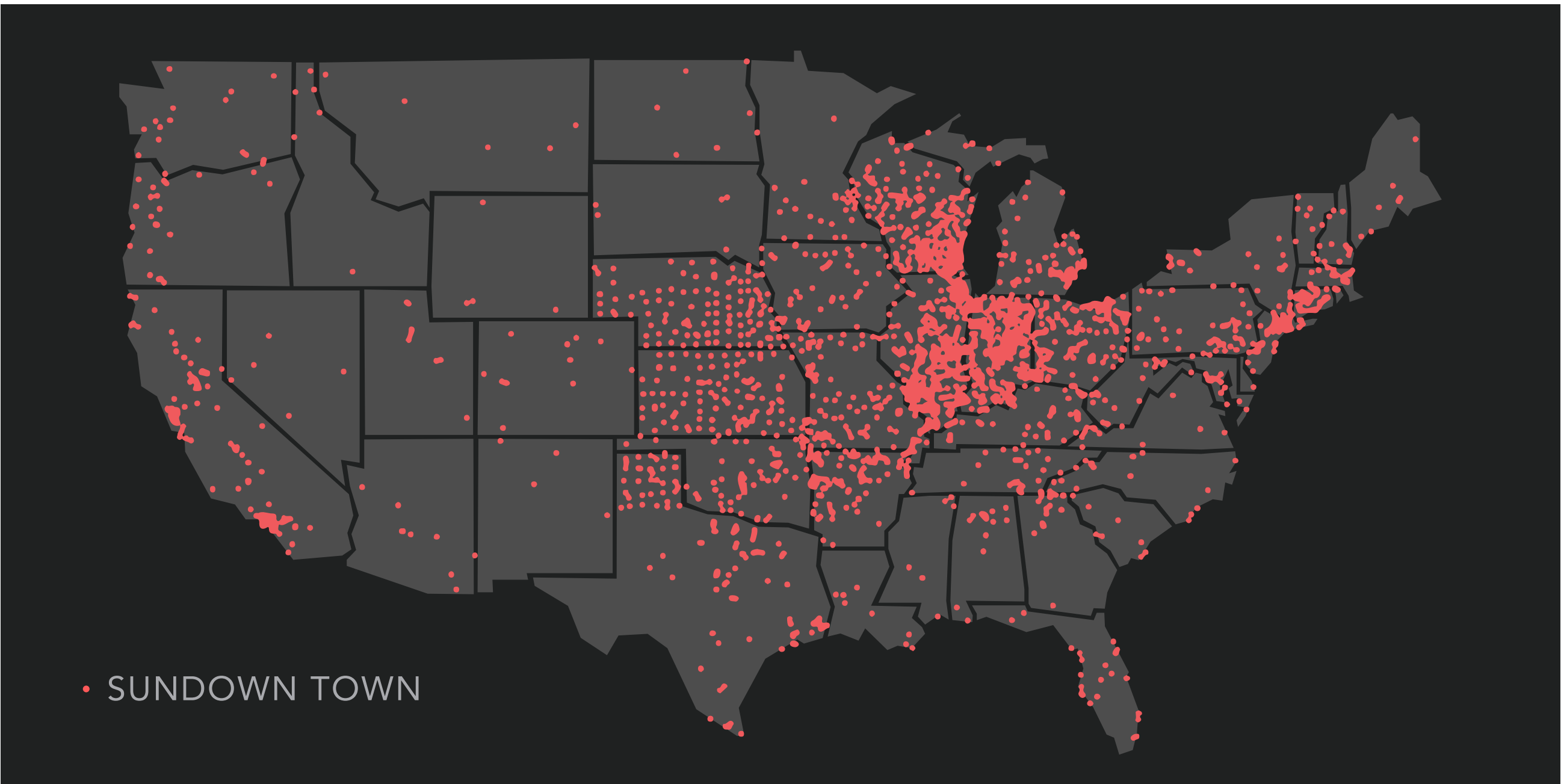## The Story of a Sundown Town

Blake Thresher

Abstract

"White After Dark" is an animated story depicting the formation of a fictitious Sundown Town. The project uses storytelling to contrast the different experiences of residents in the town and highlight their hidden history. A similar sequence of events occurred in towns across the country between 1890 and 1940. A Black resident was accused of a crime. Panic spread throughout the White residents of the town. Finally, the White residents drove out the Black residents of the town. In many cases this was a violent process, often leading to the burning down of Black homes or lynching of the accused. The White residents were seldom held accountable for their crimes. After expelling the Black community, they passed ordinances, hung signs, and threatened violence to keep their town all-White.
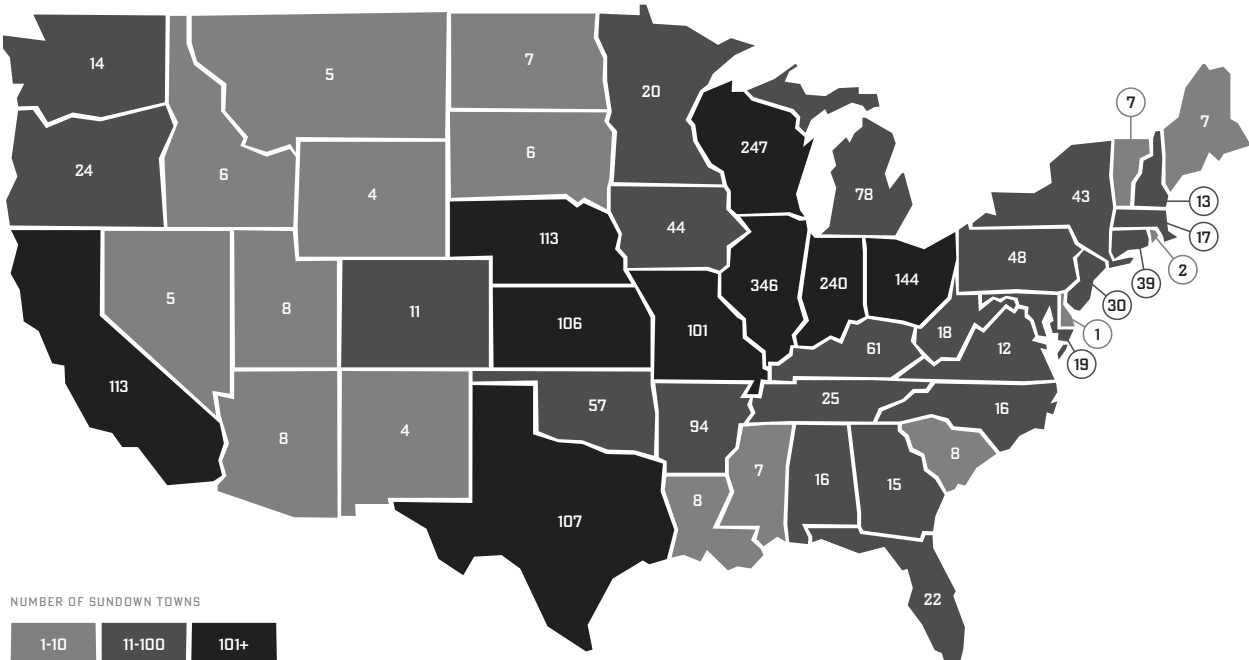
SUNDOWN TOWNS - DATA GATHERED BY JAMES LOEWEN. IMAGE BY BLAKE THRESHER

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Design

The design works alongside the story. The old man's character design is formed from a shifting texture of white paint. This is both a visual representation of the lies he tells during his narration and the history of Sundown Towns in America. The flashbacks, which show the viewer the truth, are more detailed and substantial. They are formed from rigid shapes and gritty textures to make them more substantial than the lies of the old man.

Outcomes

Using a universal set of events allows the story to become a summary of how Sundown Towns formed and became obscure. The use of story forces the viewer to empathize with the characters. Even though the events are generalized, they become specific as characters move through them. Juxtaposing the narration against the truth forces viewers to assess the event on their own and hopefully draw their own conclusions.
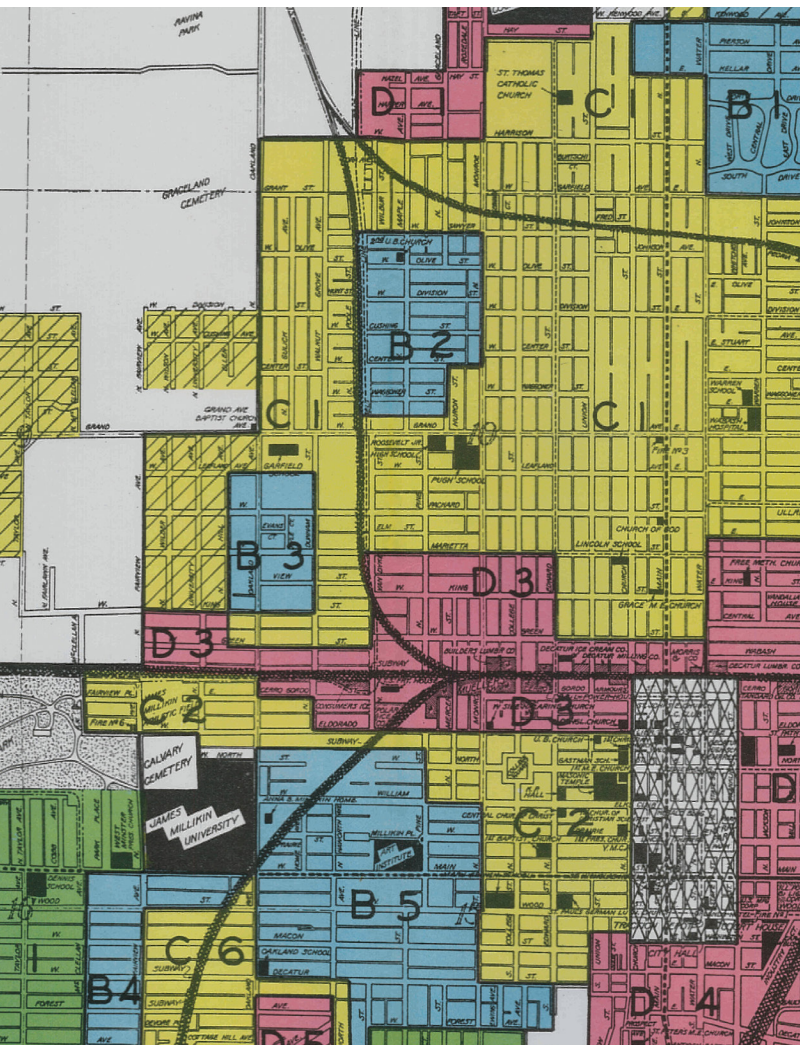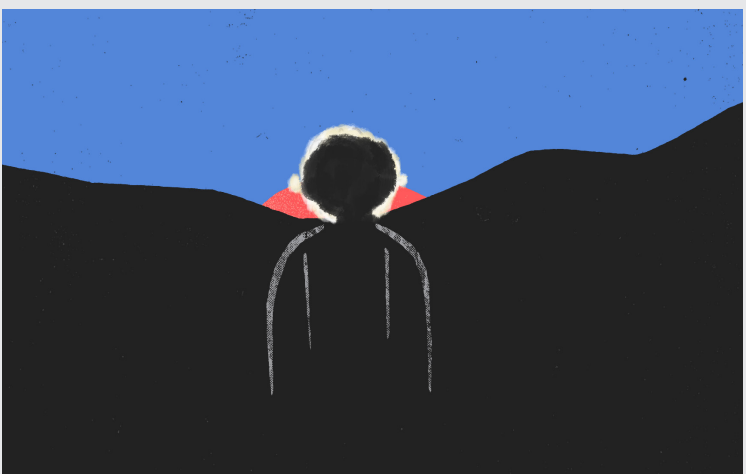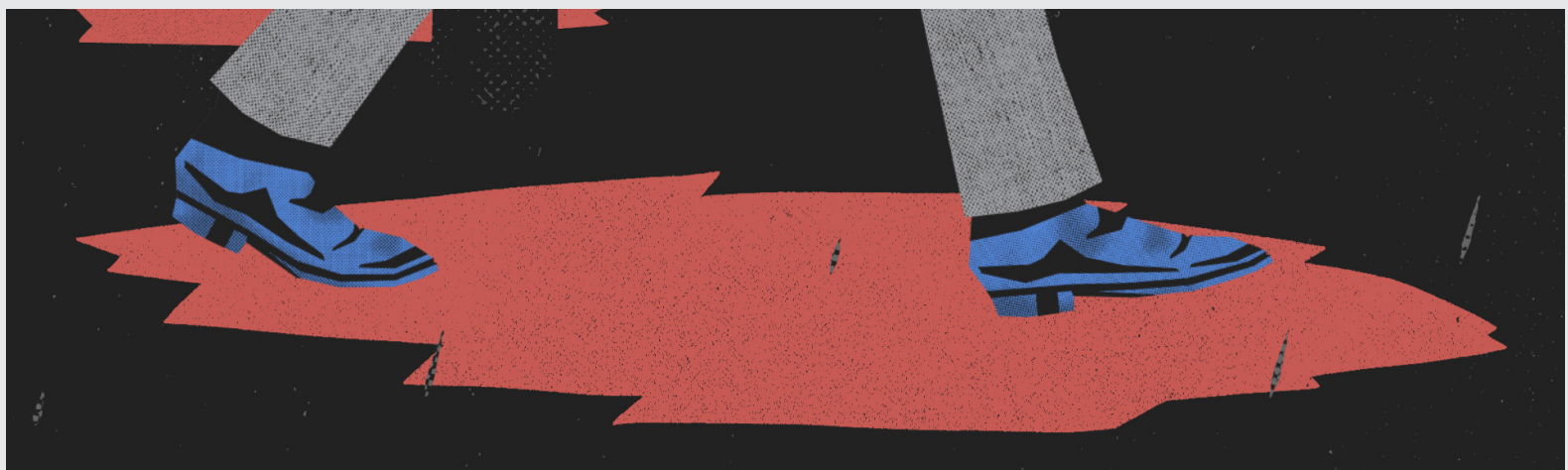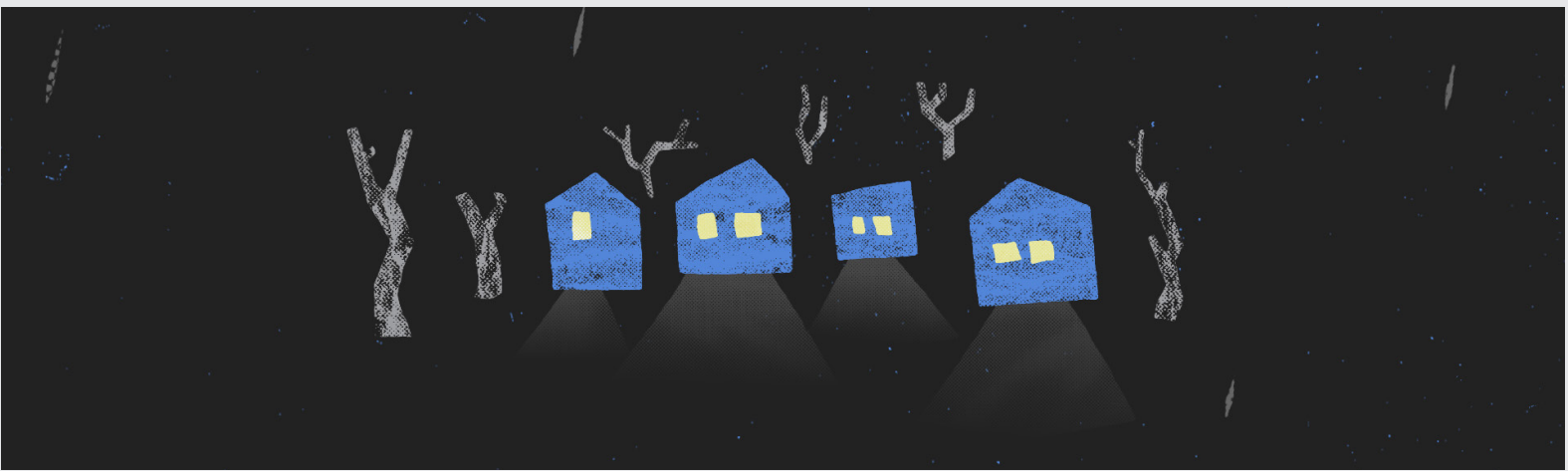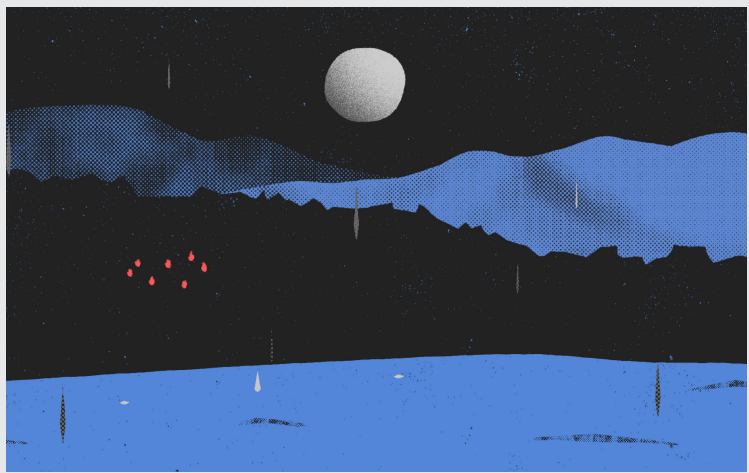

1952 A CITY IS BORN - LEVITTOWN, PA, BY 19KING14

TITLE LETTERING, BY BLAKE THRESHER

The title lettering is based on signage from the period. The name "Sundown Town" was derived from the signs placed outside towns warning Black travelers to leave before dark.

The color is based on Home Owners' Loan Corporation Security Maps, which contributed to segregation and were contemporaneous with Sundown Towns. The colors were adjusted slightly to increase contrast.

"MAPPING INEQUALITY", ROBERT K. NELSON, ET AL.

Still Images from Final Animation

STILL IMAGES FROM FINAL ANIMATION, BY BLAKE THRESHER