



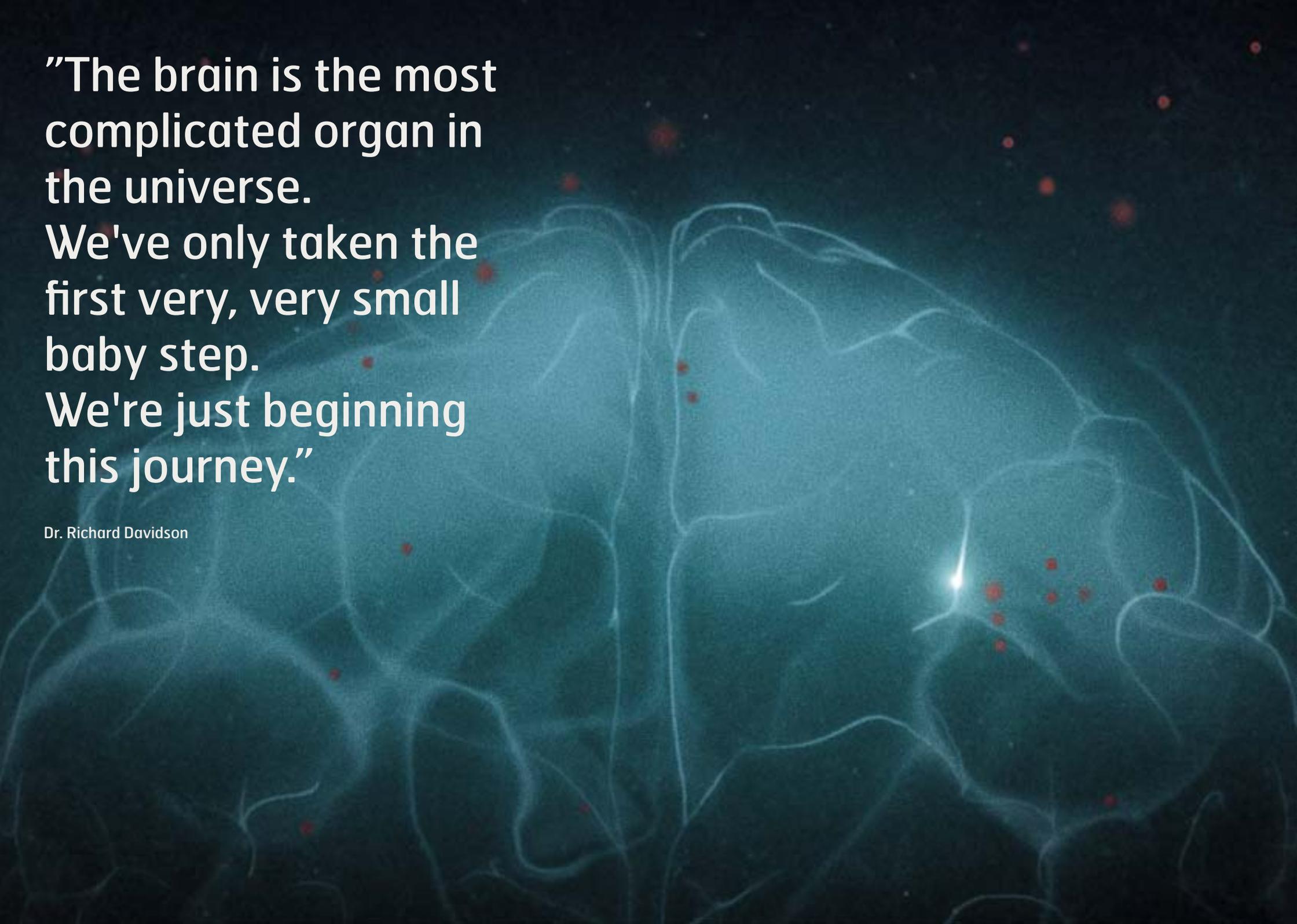
# FREE THE MIND

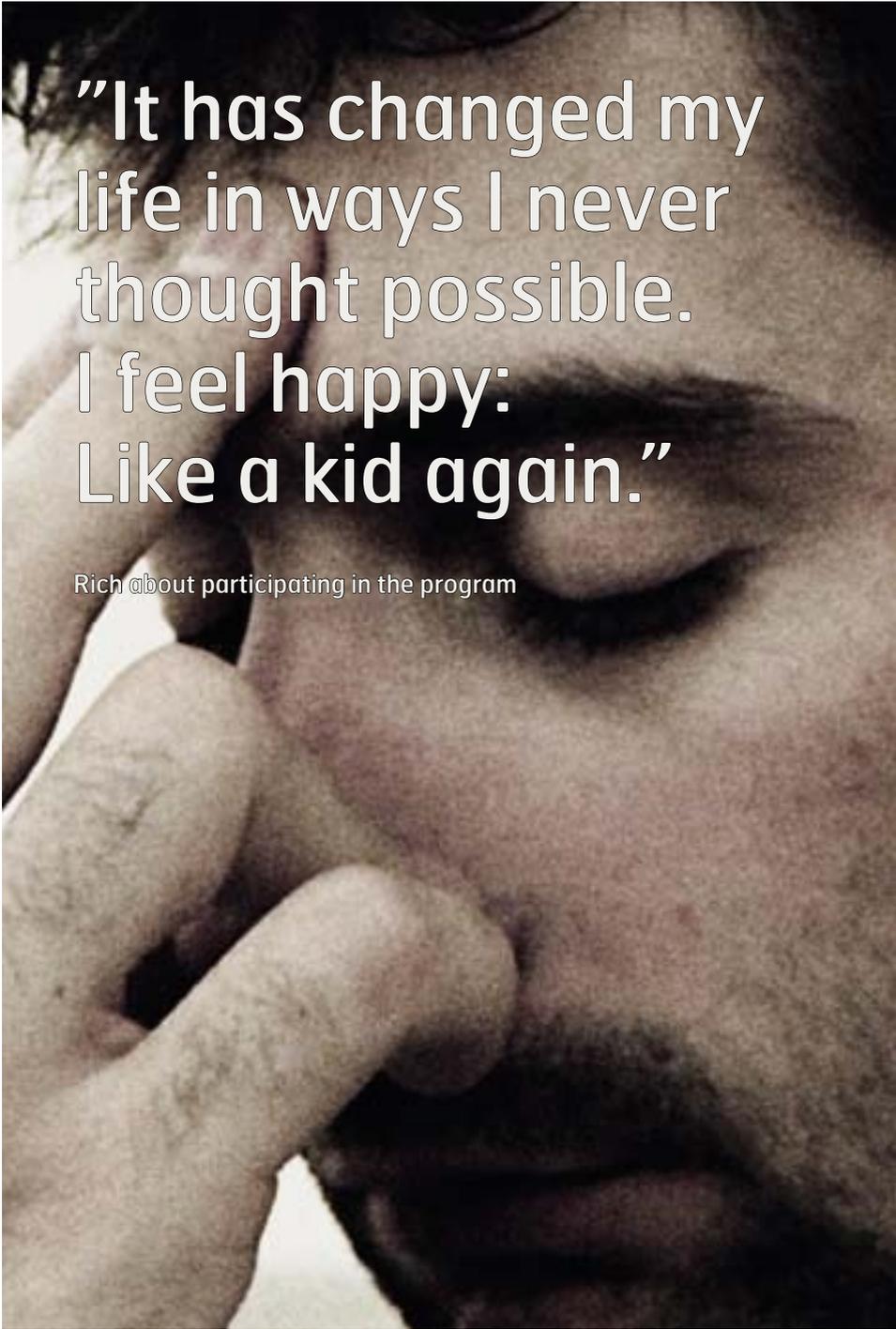
CAN YOU REWIRE THE BRAIN JUST BY TAKING A BREATH?

A documentary film by Phie Ambo

“The brain is the most complicated organ in the universe. We've only taken the first very, very small baby step. We're just beginning this journey.”

Dr. Richard Davidson





“It has changed my life in ways I never thought possible. I feel happy: Like a kid again.”

Rich about participating in the program

## FREE THE MIND

# LED BACK TO LIFE BY THE POWER OF THOUGHT

Free the Mind is the fantastic tale of how one man's vision provides a turning point in the lives of three people.

Professor Richard Davidson is one of the world's leading researchers of the human brain. He sets out to discover if, and how, it is possible to physically change the brain using only the power of thought.

Steve and Rich are just two out of thousands of American war veterans. Their lives have turned into painful nightmares; restless insomniacs tormented by their own consciences after events witnessed and deeds done during wartime.

Will, 5 years old, suffers from ADHD and anxiety. His parents are eager to try other options than those provided by traditional medicine.

Can Professor Richard Davidson make a difference? Can he free these people from their miserable existences and help them lead ordinary lives? Free the Mind follows the three test subjects on a daring journey into the deepest recesses of the human mind.

## FREE THE MIND

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

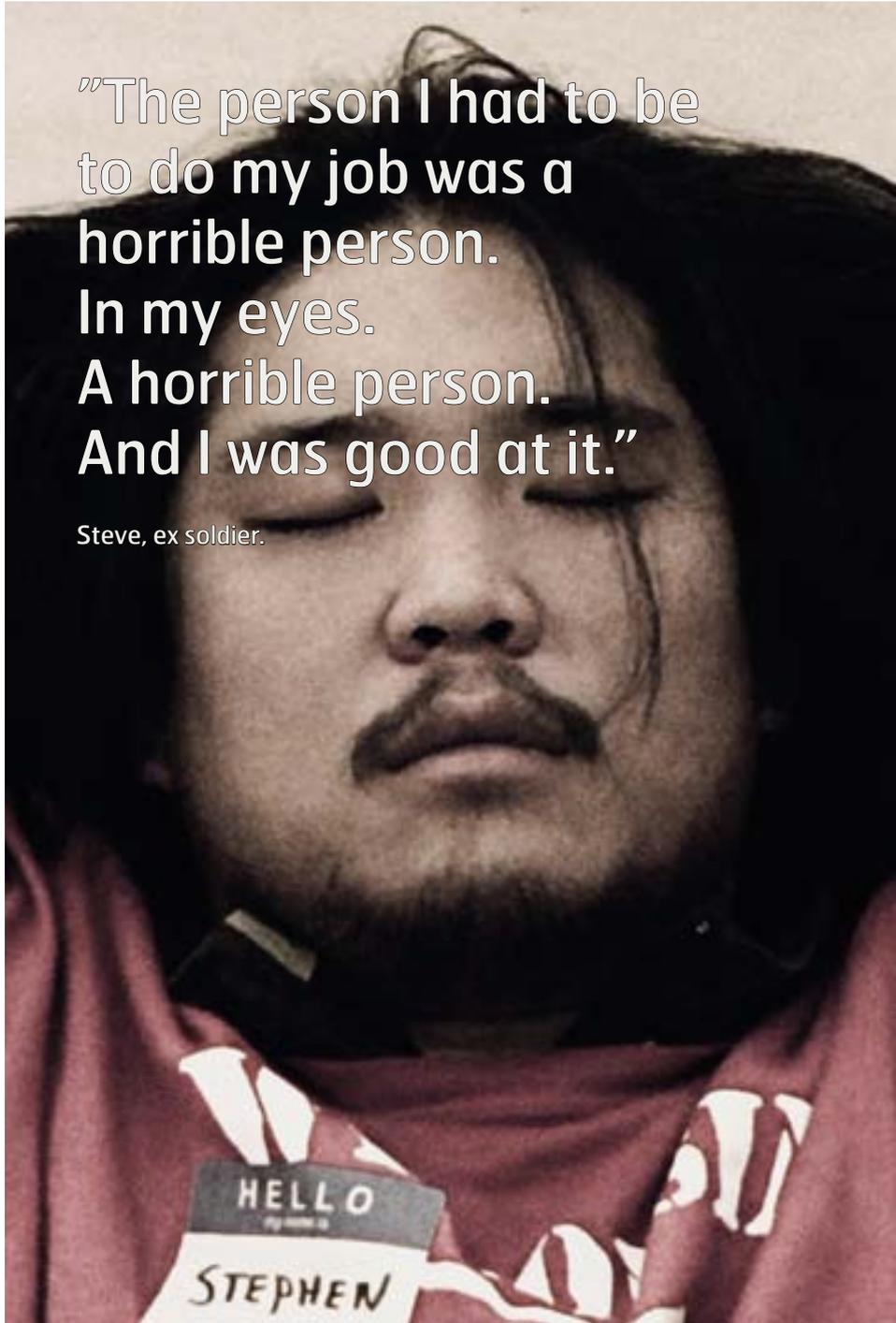
We are entering a new era – a Renaissance where everything gets turned up side down. In all fields, science makes new discoveries that constantly change our world view and leave nothing the way we first assumed. Our knowledge expands and gets more complex. Constantly, new fundamental questions are raised about who we are as human beings. The more questions asked, the more obvious it is to me how many things we still don't understand. I find that very inspiring!

FREE THE MIND is the second part of my trilogy on the fundamental human questions. The first film "Mechanical love" (2007) was about robot science. Characteristic for both films is their location in the field where science meets reality and where scientists use dashes and question marks instead of dots. In "Free The Mind" the central questions are: What is a thought and how does it create a manifestation in the body? Can we make a physical change of the brain only by the power of thoughts?

My personal reason for choosing this subject was sudden panic attacks a couple of years ago. It was a very physical experience, and I felt as if the record in my mind was stuck and that it took a physical effort to get the pick up back in the groove. I found that meditation could be the push I needed, and I became interested in understanding how it was linked. It made me want to open up the skull and look into the brain and see what was really happening during meditation.

FREE THE MIND is the result of that study. The film is not an answer but the beginning of an ongoing debate on what the human being is.

Phie Ambo,  
May 2012



"The person I had to be  
to do my job was a  
horrible person.  
In my eyes.  
A horrible person.  
And I was good at it."

Steve, ex soldier.



FREE THE MIND

## A GREAT FILM ABOUT THE POWER OF THOUGHT

With her latest documentary, 'Free the Mind', everambitious and already respected director Phie Ambo seems to have outdone herself. In previous films she has put forth immense, ethical questions that, at a glance, might seem difficult to translate into scripted action on screen.

'Free the Mind' revolves around nothing less than the power of thought and the brain's ability to develop and heal the tormented mind of a human being – using no medication at all. Part of the magic of 'Free the Mind' is that Phie Ambo succeeds in conveying scientific discovery and experience of the brain's fascinating potential for development in a way that makes the abstract tangible – and engages and captivates the audience completely.

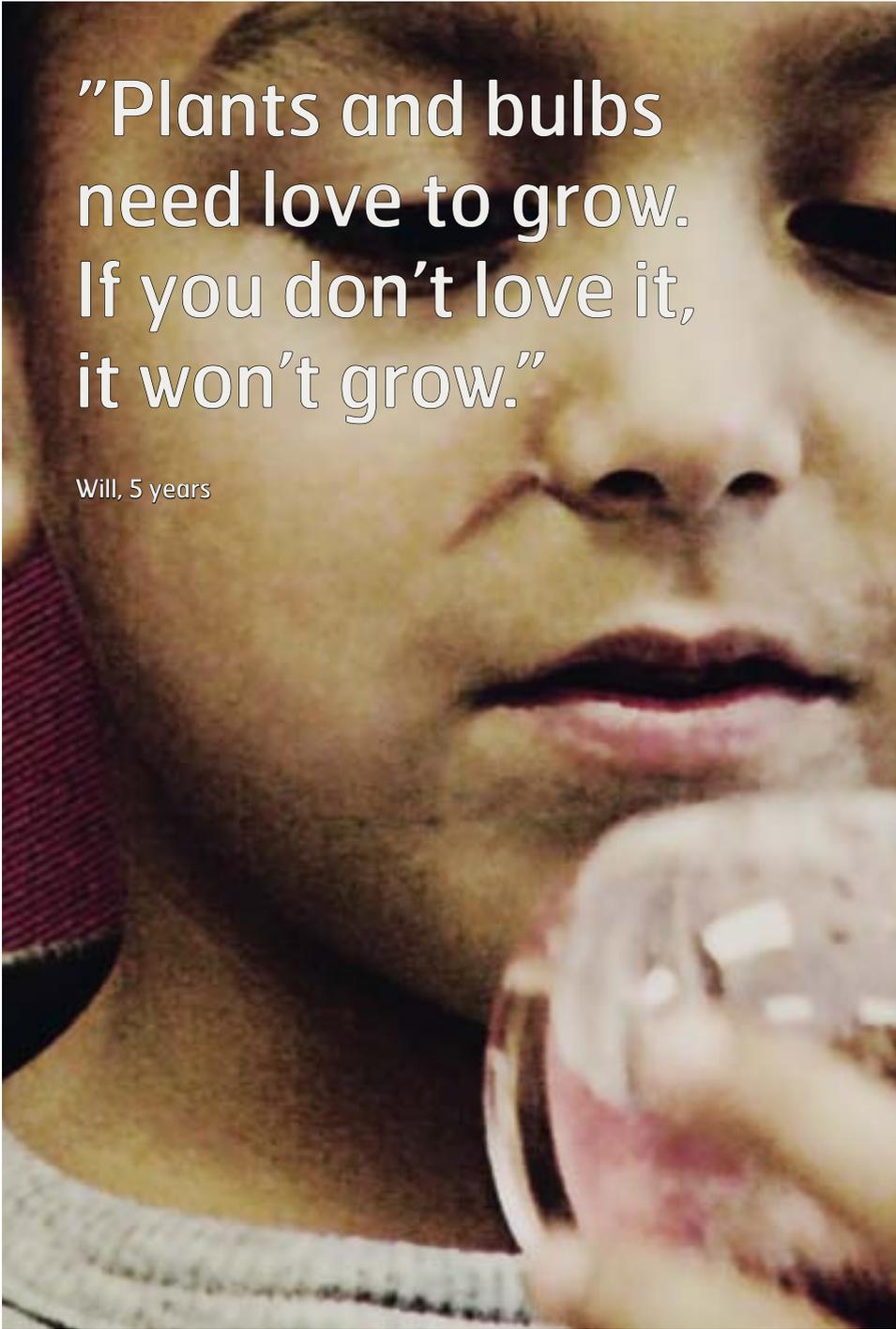
'Free the Mind' has been so successful in little Denmark that it has seen its run in theatres extended again and again. A rare feat for documentaries in general, but even more so for one that has scientific research at its core, along with human emotion and reaction. 'Free the Mind' is the great, surprising documentary success of 2012 in Denmark – popular with critics and audiences alike.

Part of its fans recognise and identify with the issues discussed in the film. Accompanied by visionary, graphical presentations and emotional music, we follow the development of three people in extremely difficult circumstances. Five-year-old Will suffers from ADHD, attention

deficit hyperactive disorder. He has panic attacks and his behaviour is self-destructive. Veterans Rich and Steve, like so many of their Iraq and Afghanistan colleagues, have been diagnosed with PTSD – post traumatic stress disorder. All three enrol in recognised brain scientist and professor Richard Davidson's well-founded attempt to heal emotional pain by means of daily meditation, respiratory exercise and other forms of conscious mental training.

The power of thought turns out to actually improve the conditions of both the veterans and Will. Slowly, but steadily, they learn to exercise and focus their attention consciously with the help of Richard Davidson's methods – and with no side effects. At the beginning of the film, Will is overwhelmed by fear just at the thought of taking a lift – even with adults accompanying him. Towards the end, he is clearly better with no weird science being applied. Also, the veterans experience change in patterns of thought and breathing, something which has a profound effect on other veterans watching the film.

'Free the Mind' is not just a relevant, convincing and sensationally well-founded film about a subject made sensitive in a time where both ADHD and PTSD are frequent diagnoses not only given but also medicated against. Furthermore, the film is a compellingly beautiful experience as Phie Ambo succeeds in piecing together the different parts into a diverse, exceptional whole.



"Plants and bulbs need love to grow. If you don't love it, it won't grow."

Will, 5 years

## FREE THE MIND

# THEATRICAL RELEASE PLANS BY INTERNATIONAL FILM CIRCUIT

FREE THE MIND is smart and impeccably well-crafted. The storyline about treatment for returning Iraqi war veterans will tap into a keen American interest of the moment and therefore generate a lot of interest in the media. And it will appeal to multiple special interest groups including the yoga-meditation-new age- holistic crowd on the one hand, and child psychologists and other mental health practitioners on the other hand.

We open in NY and Madison only to best position the film for national expansion. New York is the epicenter of the national media and is therefore critical to establishing the profile of any film, and Madison to take advantage of Richard Davidson's presence there and more importantly, of the Dalai Lama's planned visit there in May 2013. We should launch the film in NY and Madison in May to take advantage of the national media we will be able to generate out of Madison at that time. After New York and Madison we will expand nationally.

Our theatrical release campaign will be designed to give the film as high a profile as possible. As part of this campaign, we will get the trailer placed on screen in theaters and on scores of websites across of the internet. This trailer placement and national editorial coverage will maximize the film's profile and drive viewership across all media platforms.

International Film Circuit will retain dedicated film publicists to get Free the Mind reviewed and, more importantly, pitch feature stories to editors across all media. They also work with experienced promotional agencies to mount a grass-

roots campaign to reach out directly to the film's natural audiences and affinity groups. Grass-roots strategies range from email blasts and on-line viral marketing through organizations and web portals, to direct postcard distribution to appropriate brick and mortar locations.

Simply put, we envision a multi-tiered campaign that utilizes all the key strengths to maximum effect in both a top down (national and local press and media (trailer, art, ads) and a bottom up (social grassroots outreach, promotional partnerships, word of mouth) approach.

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Wendy Lidell at International Film Circuit will be responsible for the US campaign. Wendy Lidell is Founder and President of International Film Circuit, a boutique theatrical distributor of specialty films to art houses and commercial multiplexes nationwide since 1987. During its first decade, InFC earned a reputation for excellence, winning acclaim for its introduction into the US of previously unknown filmmakers such as Raul Ruiz, Alexander Sokurov, Hou Hsiao-hsien and Nanni Moretti. In 1998 she was invited to set up a theatrical division for then video and television distributor, Fox Lorber, which later became Wellspring Media. As Vice President of Theatrical Releasing for Wellspring, the division grew to release six to eight titles per year, including Russian Ark (which broke box office house records across the country), Under the Sand starring Charlotte Rampling, Yi Yi by Edward Yang (named Best Film of the Year by the National Society of Film Critics), and On the Ropes (nominated for a documentary Academy Award). Since leaving Wellspring in 2004, Lidell has released over two dozen films, including Don't Move, starring Penelope Cruz, Black Gold in association with California Newsreel and Oxfam America, Darwin's Nightmare, which earned her a second documentary Academy Award nomination, and Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg, which grossed over \$1m.

## FREE THE MIND IN PUBLIC

During launch of the film 'Free the Mind', strategic agenda setting allows the transferral of the film's themes and the social aspects it deals with into the public domain – away from typical film journalism and into the public and political eye, where the film has a very real possibility of exacting influence.

In Denmark, the film has successfully drawn the public's attention and caused the media to take a keen and unbiased interest in the ramifications of Richard Davidson's research and transfer the themes of the film to a national context by posing a simple question: "Does the research of Richard Davidson hold the key to our contemporary challenges?"

In order to successfully duplicate the agenda setting process utilised in connection with the film's premiere in Denmark, it is necessary to activate and harness different actors able to represent the film's problematic in the media and thereby definitively bring the theme to the political agenda. The film leaves two important impressions, springing from society's treatment of veterans with PTSD and the lack of understanding of children with ADHD, which allow a very diverse group of actors and networks to unfold the problematics of the film and its suggested solutions on as many platforms.

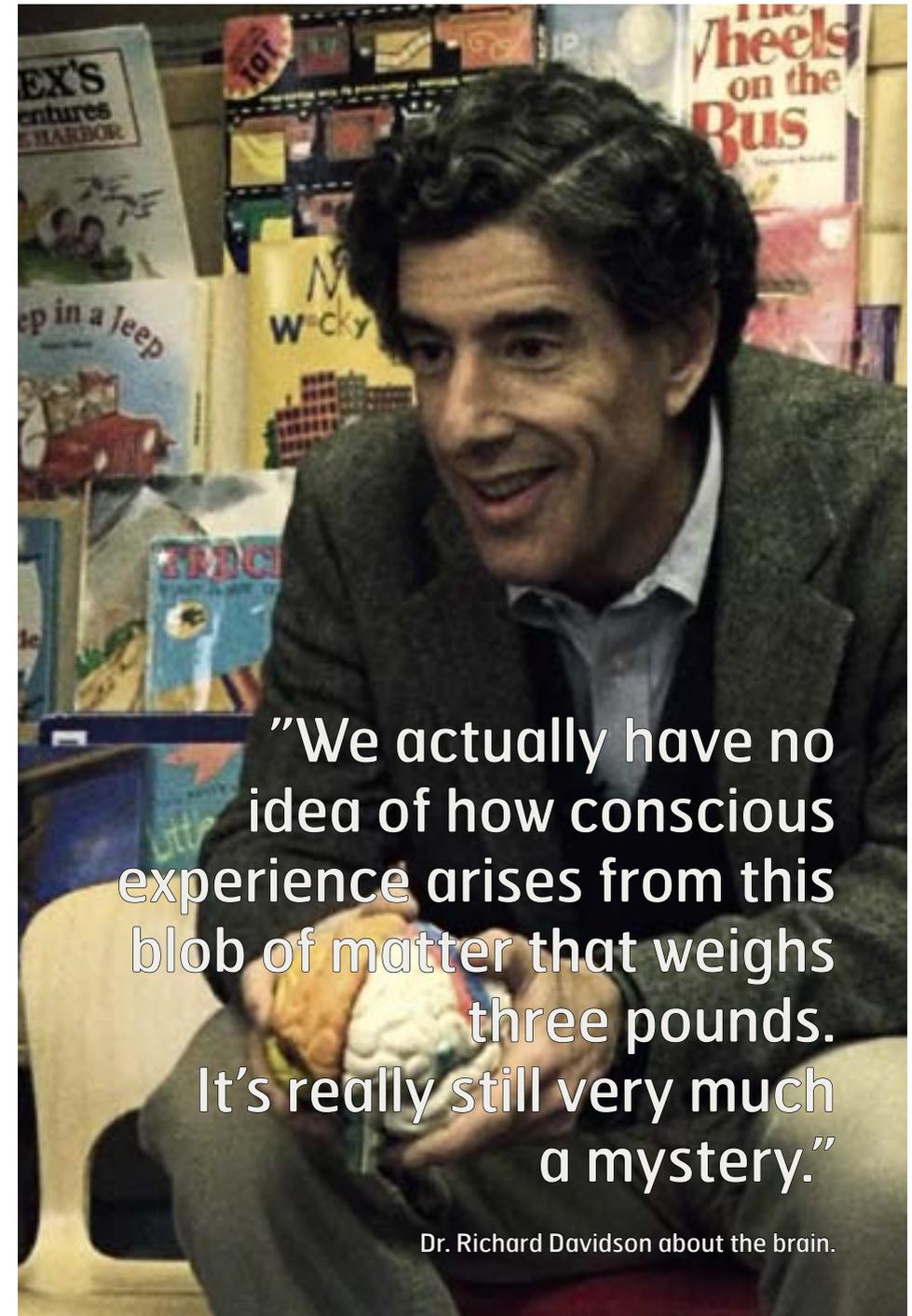
A broad activation of existing NGO networks, therapists and public organizations and institutions is recommended, also allowing these entities access to the film prior to its premiere. By

presenting a series of relevant facts and questions founded on the suicide rate amongst veterans and about the risk of life-long side-effects in children treated medically for ADHD, capturing the attention of film- and news journalists is a fairly straightforward process. As a large number of closed pre-screenings are held, an active corps of debaters and experts is built, serving to underpin the film's relevance and contribute to the level of debate both in and outside the media.

To ensure that the film's themes are framed in a national context, it is recommended to establish cooperation with scientific institutions and your national centre for social research. By providing the film with a foothold amongst scientists, the opportunity to translate seemingly difficult problematics to the public is created and thereby the possibility of creating public debate demanding political action.

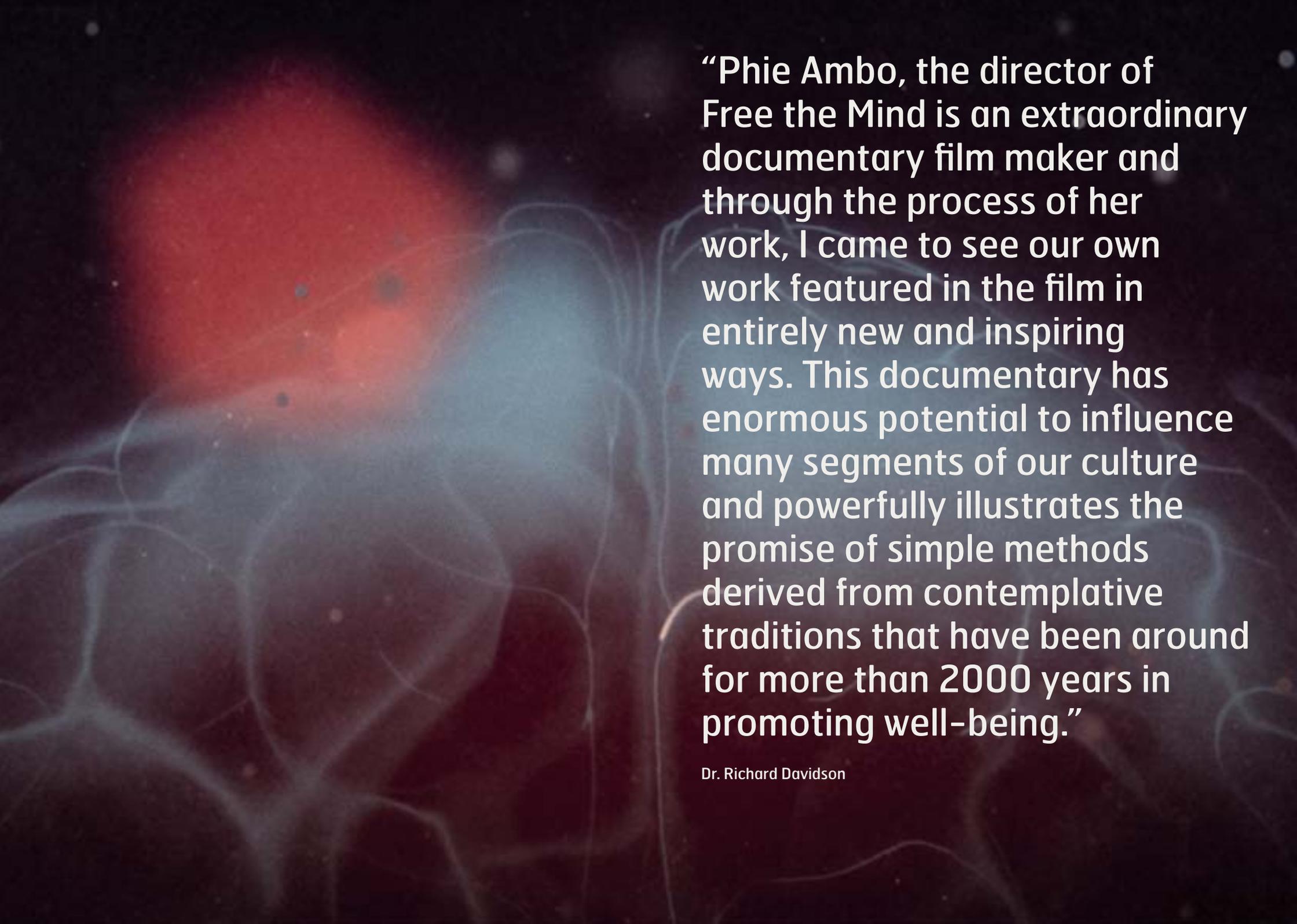
From the film's world premiere in Denmark and the establishment of an ambassador corps of people and organisations either working with the veteran issue or that of ADHD, establishing the film's well-deserved place in the agenda of politicians involved in social matters and education took a mere two months.

– Through the strategic, focused use of agenda setting the film holds the potential to drift from the silver screen into media and public debate and end up an important and visionary topic on the political agenda.



"We actually have no idea of how conscious experience arises from this blob of matter that weighs three pounds. It's really still very much a mystery."

Dr. Richard Davidson about the brain.

The background of the slide is a dark, abstract composition. On the left side, there is a large, glowing red and orange circular shape that fades into the dark background. Overlaid on this are several translucent, glowing blue and white patterns that resemble neural connections or a complex network of lines. The overall effect is ethereal and scientific.

“Phie Ambo, the director of Free the Mind is an extraordinary documentary film maker and through the process of her work, I came to see our own work featured in the film in entirely new and inspiring ways. This documentary has enormous potential to influence many segments of our culture and powerfully illustrates the promise of simple methods derived from contemplative traditions that have been around for more than 2000 years in promoting well-being.”

Dr. Richard Davidson



**DIRECTOR**

**PHIE  
AMBO**

This year's release of the film 'Free the Mind' marks the current height of the universally relevant and unusually brave artistic career of director Phie Ambo. For the last decade, this young, enviably creative filmmaker has continued to astonish with work that springs from concrete and clearly defined subject matter yet manages to present to us some of the greatest questions facing the human race.

Usually, she both writes, directs and shoots the films that have continued to erase the line between emotion and science that, while imaginary, is so hard to conquer. With no loss of intimacy or visuality, she succeeds in conveying facts soberly and faithfully. Her films take us to every corner of the human brain, and they do so in a visionary manner. Also, she masters that special art of plotting her films in a way that engages and grips the audience right until the end. This is true also of her ambitious feature length titles – from 'Family' (2001) to current 'Free the Mind'.

Phie Ambo was born on December 6th, 1973 and graduated from The National Film School of Denmark in 2003. A co-creation with Sami Saif, 'Family' provided her national and international breakthrough. For this film, the duo received the prestigious Joris Ivens Award at the IDFA in Amsterdam. 'Family' is a powerful, personal depiction of Sami Saif's search for his father following his brother's suicide and his mother's death. Other of Phie Ambo's films, both short and feature length work, get very close to their characters. This is seen, for instance, in the strangely entertaining 'Gambler' (2006), where we are given an insight into the diverse personality of feature film director Nicolas Winding Refn at a time where he is heavily indebted. That is, after 'Pusher' (1996), before 'Drive' (2011) and amidst the utter failure of 'Fear X' (2003).

In 'Mechanical Love', robots resemble human beings so well that loving them is an obvious reaction. A Japanese scientist has reincarnated his own, perfect, physical self in robot form. But how does he transfer his soul to it? And is it truly possible for a woman in Germany to be in love with a robot that, to the slightest detail, looks like a baby seal? These immense ethical, and scientific, dilemmas and challenges engage Phie Ambo. This is true as well of her current film about the enormous potential of the brain 'Free the Mind' – already a hit with critics and audiences alike.



**PRODUCER**

**SIGRID  
DYEKJÆR**

Professional competency, personal commitment and an exceptional reputation – Sigrid Dyekjær possesses all of these in abundance. Over the last decade, both in native Denmark and abroad, the enterprising film producer has managed to cause a stir. The documentary, in particular, is where her passion lies and it has been the main focus of her professional life since the turn of the millennium – although feature and short films are also on her resume. In documentaries, she has manifested herself so convincingly that an impressive amount of her 20 productions have won coveted awards both nationally and internationally. The name of Sigrid Dyekjær, therefore, is incontestably connected to the success of Danish cinema on the international documentary stage in recent years.

Born on the 28th of September 1969, she studied dramaturgy at university level before starting her career as a producer in 2000. Amongst her most acclaimed successes is the breakthrough film of director Pernille Rose Grønkjær, 'The Monastery' (2006) and, so far, three of director Phie Ambo's films: 'Gambler' (2006), 'Mechanical Love' (2007) and now also 'Free the Mind' (2012). Furthermore, she is also behind Eva Mulvad's 'The Good Life' (2011). Each of the works mentioned here have, deservedly, reached an international audience. All of them, in their own way, tell stories of profound, ethical relevance – and they do so in an accessible, compelling manner. With additional productions, such as 'Cairo Garbage' (2009) directed by Mikala Krogh and 'Love Addict' (2011) directed by Pernille Rose Grønkjær, Sigrid Dyekjær has shown the talent and courage needed to get behind films that are suited to feature film length, lets the viewer connect and identify with the subject matter and are also characterised by being aesthetically impressive and challenging.

The aesthetically innovative and, in some cases, fiction inspired approach has, since the middle of the last decade, been pivotal in lifting Danish documentaries to a prominent, international level. In this process, Sigrid Dyekjær has continued to prove herself a creative entrepreneur, developer and producer. She has been a founding part of film companies of ground-breaking importance to Danish documentary and along with four female, Danish directors, she is behind elite company Danish Documentary.



# DANISH DOCUMENTARY

## – NOT YOUR USUAL BOYS' CLUB

Amongst the delusions about documentarists is that they are anorak-clad, hippie loners who are happy to work in the shadows of the film industry producing work that only few have access to and even fewer ever watch. Prejudices like these are hardly given weight by the women behind the aggressive, quality conscious company Danish Documentary. Not that low heels, a sensible overcoat or humility are things to scoff at. There is, however, little reason to remain invisibly silent when, in fact, you have something quite remarkable to offer. These five women and owners of Danish Documentary do – including a capacity for seamless cooperation.

At the original foundation in 2007 the three initiators, Pernille Rose Grønkjær, Eva Mulvad and Phie Ambo, wanted to make their works widely available through [www.danishdocumentary.com](http://www.danishdocumentary.com). All three are internationally recognised and award winning directors, all graduated from The National Film School of Denmark, who have all contributed immensely to the growth and development of Danish documentary film throughout the last decade. Both Phie Ambo, Pernille Rose Grønkjær and Eva

Mulvad have won main awards at the IDFA in Amsterdam in addition to numerous others.

In 2006, Grønkjær won the prestigious Joris Ivens Award for her creative documentary feature 'The Monastery' about 82-year-old bachelor and hermit Mr. Vig, who gains the company of Russian nun Sister Amvrosjia. The same year in Amsterdam, Eva Mulvad received a Silver Wolf for best documentary under 60 minutes – the gripping, truthful tale, 'Enemies of Happiness', about a young, female politician fighting for change in her homeland Afghanistan. The last of the original founders of Danish Documentary is already acclaimed director Phie Ambo, who took home the main award at the 2001 IDFA for 'Family'. Later, producer Sigrid Dyekjær and director Mikala Krogh were attached to the company with, among other projects, 'Cairo Garbage', a film portraying the multimillion city of Cairo through its boundless amount of garbage.

Today, Danish Documentary ranks amongst the most interesting and recognised producers of documentary films in the world, using Not Your Usual Boys' Club as their indicative motto.

**EUROPEN RELEASE: NOVEMBER 2012**

**US RELEASE : MAY 2013**

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