

# Home is where the art is

Young filmmaker Jesse Kreitzer returns to the place he grew up to seek support for an ambitious new project

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BRATTLEBORO — The feature film "The Wake" tells the mysterious and poignant story of a grieving social worker who cares for a dying woman in secrecy from his wife and children.

It is also the story of a young filmmaker whose talents were carefully nurtured as he grew up in the area and whose commitment to his art has led him down a very hard road.

Those two stories will converge in the Cotton Mill in Brattleboro on Friday night, when Jesse Kreitzer presents a fundraiser for his debut feature film at the Center for Digital Art from 7 to 9 p.m.

"The Wake" was born from a short story Kreitzer wrote for a class at Emerson College seven years ago. He said he knew almost immediately the story needed to be expanded into a film.

"It's always been there. For six, seven years, it's been on my chest," said Kreitzer, who grew up in Marlboro, graduated from Brattleboro Union High School and then from Emerson College in 2007 with a degree in visual media arts.

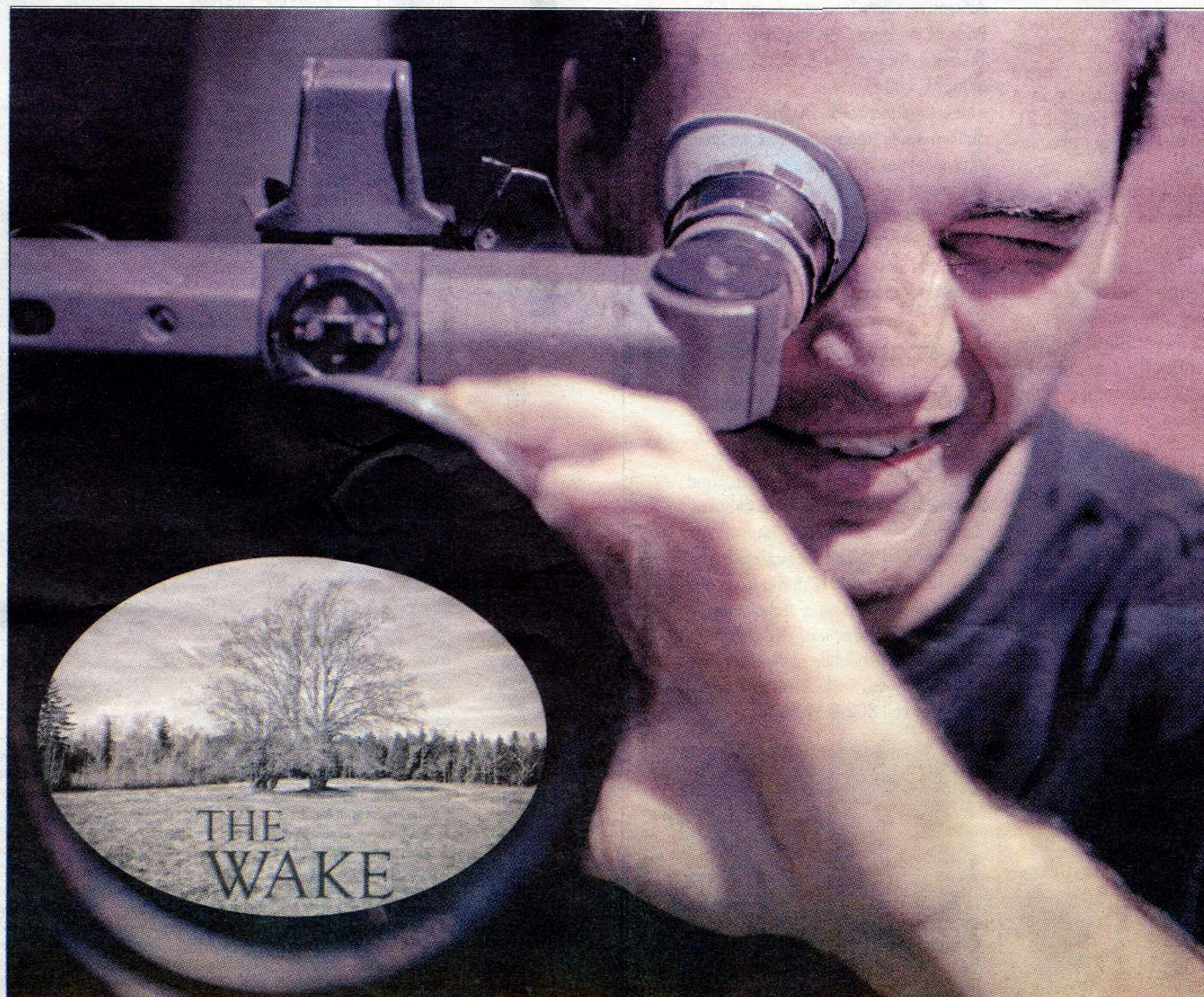
Now, Kreitzer needs your help getting this project off his chest and onto film. He hopes to start filming "The Wake" in February 2012 in Marlboro with an eye toward getting it done perhaps a year later, in time to enter it into major festivals and then ... theatrical release, commercial distribution and the means to make a second film.

Kreitzer has his work cut out for him. Not only has he written and will direct "The Wake," but he's also actively engaged in the business side. First up, is to raise the \$120,000 he has budgeted for the project.

"I embrace the challenge. I've never been daunted by it because I'll make it happen," said Kreitzer, whose commitment and level-headed approach are two of the project's most persuasive selling points. "It's an uphill crawl right now, being a first-time filmmaker."

Actually, he's just a first-time *feature* filmmaker. The truth is, Kreitzer has really been a filmmaker all his life and credits the support he had throughout his childhood here for nurturing his talents.

He can remember videotaping reports for his classes at Marlboro Elementary School, including a memorable one on fisher cats, shot on location in the woods, that awak-



Submitted photo

**Filmmaker Jesse Kreitzer, who honed his skills at Marlboro Elementary School and at the Center for Digital Art, returns home to drum up support for his first feature film, "The Wake."**

ened his understanding of the power of film to tell a story.

As a junior at BUHS, he was accepted into the film program that the Center for Digital Art runs as part of the Windham Regional Career Center. There, he first worked with Michel Moyses, co-founder and director of the CDA, whose own professional career in filmmaking includes work with Woody Allen, Brian DePalma and Jonathan Demme.

As a senior at BUHS, Kreitzer did a year-long independent study with Moyses, producing a film called "Prophet." He also did a documentary called "Cow Day" about the first Strolling of the Heifers.

He said his time studying with Moyses at CDA "changed my life," imparting critical lessons not only in filmmaking but in media awareness and the works of great filmmakers like Ingmar Bergman and Andrei Tarkovsky.

"Michel has been a huge mentor and really my first one," said Kreitzer.

Moyses currently serves as an advisor to "The Wake," along with David Kleiler, director and founder of Local Sightings, a Boston-based organization dedicated to helping filmmakers get their films made, sold and seen.

"Jesse is just a very talented, gifted young man, who has a good eye for filmmaking and a keen interest in film," said Moyses.

Part of CDA's mission, Moyses said, is to promote careers in film and give local students the skills to pursue those careers. Kreitzer stands as a perfect example.

After graduating from BUHS, Kreitzer went on to Emerson College, where he studied film, graduated magna cum laude and won an award for outstanding achievement in photography. After graduating in 2007, he got a job with the city of Newton, Mass., shooting and producing films of meetings and contentious local issues, public service announcements and documentaries.

In his spare time, he pursues his own film projects; he has produced more than 40 short documentary and narrative films that have been shown coast-to-coast and has won numerous regional and national awards for his work.

"My priority is to make a feature film. You can make all the short films you want, but the feature film offers avenues of distribution you just don't have," said Kreitzer. "My goal is to just make a great film."

And to do it here.

Growing up in Vermont, Kreitzer has a deep affinity for the land and the landscape here. "Boston isn't necessarily a place for creative inspiration," he said.

"The Wake" is set in Vermont and its story line — the father's grieving process and the secrets that grow out of it — follow the arc of four Vermont seasons.

Massachusetts offers certain tax advantages that would make it cheaper to shoot the film there, but "Massachusetts isn't home; Vermont is," said Kreitzer. "I recognize this state as a huge untapped resource. I want to make my film here. ... There's a great deal of pride in coming back."

Which dovetails with another interest of Moyses's and Center for Digital Art — promoting Vermont as a place for filmmaking.

But in the meantime, there is the business at hand — raising funds and getting "The Wake" done.

Kreitzer doesn't know what to expect from Friday's event at the Center for Digital Art; it may raise some funds to move the project along.

"More important it's raising support and awareness about the project," he said.

If you cannot attend or if you want to find out more, visit [www.thewakefilm.com](http://www.thewakefilm.com), [www.facebook.com/thewakefilm](http://www.facebook.com/thewakefilm), [www.twitter.com/thewakefilm](http://www.twitter.com/thewakefilm) or [www.thewakefilm.blogspot.com](http://www.thewakefilm.blogspot.com). You may also e-mail Kreitzer at [jesse@thewakefilm.com](mailto:jesse@thewakefilm.com).