

NEW
DOCS

SPRING

Have a look at our
new line-up!

2023

NOTO – A GARDEN OF STONE

In 1693, a devastating earthquake destroyed Noto in south-eastern Sicily and with it the city's ancient Greek, Roman, Arab and Norman heritage. But just a few decades later, residents and visionary architects built a new Noto a few kilometres away, a gem that was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002. Five residents show us the city's artistic and cultural treasures and the origins of "barocco siciliano". At the end of the 20th century, the city had to reinvent itself once again. Poverty, unemployment and emigration had brought about the city's decline, and the collapse of the baroque cathedral dome in 1996 appeared to signal its final defeat. But Noto rose from the ruins once more, renovating its dilapidated buildings and attracting visitors again.

After a devastating earthquake in the 18th century, a wonderfully unique form of European Baroque emerged in the Sicilian city of Noto.

History / Culture / Travel

Film by Renzo Carbonera and Markus Nickel

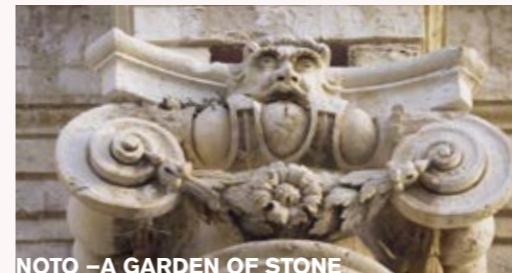
Length 52'

Co-production Alpenway Media
for SWR/ARTE

Original title Noto – Ein Garten aus Stein /
Noto – Un jardin de pierre

Year 2023

History / Culture / Travel





CITY OF STEEL – AN ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER MADE IN ITALY

Taranto in southern Italy has been home to Europe's largest steelworks since the 1960s. This is where steel production processes are known to generate toxic substances, such as dioxin and benzopyrene. Numerous studies show that cancer rates in Taranto are disproportionately high. The government in Rome has been aware of this for years, yet steel production continues. How is this possible? We follow the people of Taranto as they campaign for the plant's closure, we investigate developments in Rome and Brussels and we interview Italian and European politicians about one of the biggest environmental scandals in the history of Europe. Videos shot by workers inside the steelworks reveal the current state of the industrial plant. How can an environmental crime be covered up for so many decades, right here in the middle of Europe? What political and industrial forces are involved? An investigation into how politics and industry have succeeded in bypassing the controls of Italian and European institutions for so many years, reaping huge profits at the expense of Taranto's citizens. An almost perfect state-sanctioned environmental crime.

Europe's largest steelworks in Taranto, southern Italy, have long been criticised for emitting toxic substances. Cancer rates here are disproportionately high. Yet steel production continues. How is this possible?

Current Affairs

Film by Chiara Sambuchi

Length 52'

Co-production DOCDAYS Productions with WDR/ARTE

Original title Der giftige Himmel von Tarent – Chronik einer geduldeten Katastrophe / Le scandale de l'acier italien – Chronique d'une catastrophe annoncée

Year 2023

MEGADROUGHT – HOW THE AMERICAN WEST IS HEADING FOR DISASTER

An investigative journey with renowned NASA scientist Jay Famiglietti on the trail of America's biggest climate change-induced threat: the megadrought. We have the exclusive opportunity to accompany one of the world's most respected hydrologists on his journey through the western states of the US. Famiglietti has spent the past 20 years analysing satellite data for NASA's GRACE mission, which prove this region has lost water at an alarming rate. He shows us what this means for communities, the environment and the economy. The reservoirs that supply major cities in the western states have reached record low levels, and some towns and cities already rely on supplies from water tanks. The people there are struggling to survive, while elsewhere private agricultural enterprises or industrial sites in the middle of the desert still treat water resources unsparingly. Conflicts are emerging, with devastating consequences for flora and fauna – and prospects of a future that will be shaped by the struggle for our most precious resource unless we learn to use it sustainably.

Scientific data proves that the American west is increasingly threatened by water scarcity. Massive conflicts are emerging – defined by the struggle for our most precious resource.

Current Affairs / Science

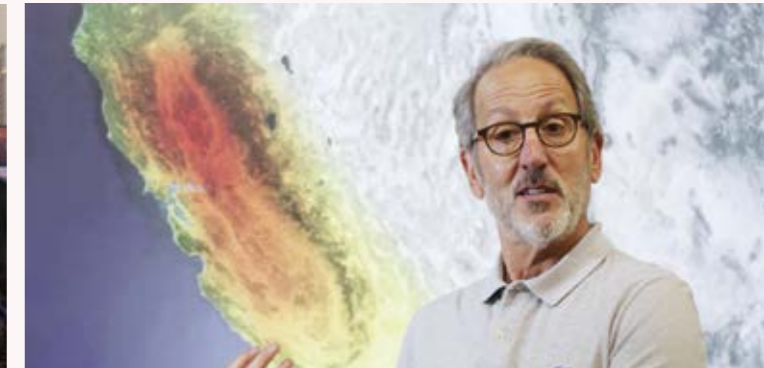
Film by Daniel Harrich

Length 52'

Production Diwafilm

Original title Megadrought – How the American West Is Heading for Disaster

Year 2023



MEGADROUGHT – HOW THE AMERICAN WEST IS HEADING FOR DISASTER



RUSSIA VS LAWYERS

After Russia started a fully-fledged war against Ukraine, the state's repressive machine against its own civil society started spinning with even greater velocity and the law system, which barely functioned before, eventually turned into a mechanism of abuse and brutality. Human rights lawyers have become the last frontier between state violence and society. Our main protagonist Mikhail Benyash has been representing activists, bloggers, and protesters for many years, now he is also helping those who refuse to serve in the war. He was the victim of reprisals long before the war started, and in October 2022 was registered as a "foreign agent" – meaning he could lose his licence and face imprisonment. Filmmaker Masha Novikova followed Benyash and a whole network of human rights lawyers for more than three years. The film documents their everyday struggle for justice in the increasingly hopeless conditions of a suffocating dictatorship. Very often they pay a high personal price to support their clients, putting themselves and their families in danger. Many have already had to leave the country, while others have remained, like Mikhail who believes that every voice counts and that every little action against the dictatorship matters.

Civil society and the law system in Russia are under severe pressure from the state. We document the struggle of human rights lawyers who fight for justice in an increasingly suffocating dictatorship.

Feature Documentary / Current Affairs
Film by Masha Novikova
Length 90' / 52'
Co-production NOVDOC, Einbahnstraße Productions and ERA FILM with RBB/ARTE
Original title Russia vs Lawyers
Year 2023

CODE OF FEAR

In 2013, the young journalist Eric Lembembe was murdered in Cameroon. He was tortured and beaten to death because he was gay and had fought for gay rights. Shocked by this gruesome murder in his home country, filmmaker Appolain Siewe sets off for Cameroon to find out more about the situation of LGBTQ people there. He soon realises that Lembembe's murder is no isolated case. Homosexuality is still a criminal offence in Cameroon, as it is in almost all African countries. Being gay is completely taboo and considered an embarrassment for families. While making the film, Siewe examines his own homophobic upbringing and seeks contact with members of his family. Since living in Europe, his outlook has changed. For his father, on the other hand, making a film on the subject is enough for him to break off all contact. Why is homophobia so firmly anchored in Cameroon society? What role does colonisation have to play in this? Siewe's own experiences, moving encounters with activists who fight for tolerance in their country in spite of all the risks, and his conversations with Cameroon scientists, sociologists and human rights activists offer a comprehensive insight into society in Cameroon.

In 2013, the young journalist and gay rights activist Eric Lembembe was murdered in Cameroon. While the filmmaker addresses his own homophobic upbringing, the film reveals Lembembe's murder was no isolated case.

Feature Documentary / Human Interest

Film by Appolain Siewe

Length 82' / 52'

Production EinHeitFilm Produktion with the support of Brot für die Welt, Elledorado e. V., MBF/Ludwig The Rental, Hannchen-Mehrzweck-Stiftung, Foundation Between Bridges-Wolfgang Tillman, German Federal Foreign Office

Original title Code der Angst

Year 2023

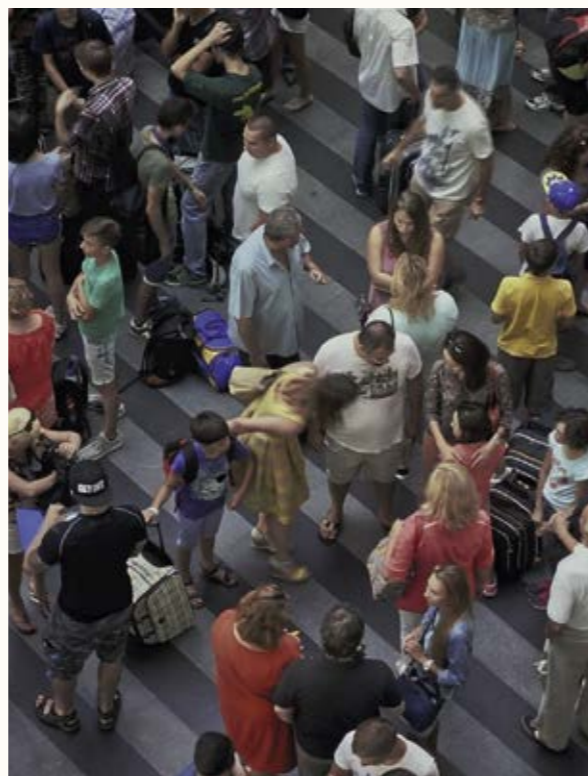
Festivals and awards Toronto Black Film Festival, Canada 2023



CODE OF FEAR



THE DARK SIDE OF ALGORITHMS



THE DARK SIDE OF ALGORITHMS

Algorithms decide whether we are creditworthy, entitled to social welfare and which partner is the right one for us. They make momentous decisions about our lives without our knowledge. It's hoped that they will be more efficient than us and eliminate human error with their cold logic. But a look behind the intimidating façade of artificial intelligence reveals a very different, rather disturbing picture. We meet people whose lives have been turned upside down by the misjudgement of algorithms. Like teenager Marie who became anorexic as a result of YouTube algorithms. Macarena, in Spain, was forced to go into hiding from her abusive husband for six years after an algorithm used by the police had calculated that she and her children were not at risk and therefore needed no further protection. Derya in the Netherlands became homeless after an algorithm branded her a fraud and the Dutch tax authorities demanded a refund of thousands of euros, which she was unable to pay. These errors stem not from the algorithms themselves, however, but from their developers and users. After all, algorithms are essentially neutral computations that can be used for good or for ill. But who is responsible if AI turns out to be a curse rather than a blessing?

What happens if algorithms make mistakes? We tell the stories of people whose lives have been irreparably damaged by algorithms. And we ask researchers, politicians and artists how we can imagine a better and safer future around AI.

Current Affairs / Society

Film by Dorothe Dörholt

Length 90' / 54'

Co-production Bildersturm Filmproduktion and Film Figures libres with NDR/ARTE, in collaboration with SPICEE, POM.tv and SRF, with the support of the CNC, Procirep, Angoa, Région Occitanie

Original title Algorithmen –

Die unberechenbare Gefahr / Algorithmes – vers un monde manipulé

Year 2022

THE HAIDA IN CANADA

The islands of Haida Gwaii off the coast of British Columbia, Canada are home to black bears and many other wild animals. The shores are lined with dense, mossy forests, and totem poles rise 53 metres high into the sky. These monuments record the history and stories of the Haida people in pictures. The Haida pass on their traditions not through written words but through spoken language. But very few people master the language because the generation that still speaks Haida fluently is slowly dying out – and their language is also at risk of disappearing. But their songs, dances and traditions are being revived again. Their importance and value have been recognised just in time. Skil Jaadee White has made it her mission to save the language from extinction and preserve her ancestors' past. The 27-year-old lives with her family in Old Masset in northwest Haida Gwaii. Her father Christian White is one of the most famous Haida carvers. The documentary offers a glimpse into the life of Skil Jaadee and her family and the Haida's sustainable lifestyle against the stunning backdrop of the archipelago. A uniquely beautiful part of the world.

Haida Gwaii, an archipelago off the west coast of Canada, is home to Skil Jaadee and her family. They live in harmony with nature and have made it their mission to save their language and preserve their history.

Human Interest

Film by Anna Pflüger

Length 45'

Co-production k22film with ARTE/ZDF

Original title Die Haida in Kanada / La voix du peuple haida au Canada – Protecteur de la nature

Year 2022



THE HAIDA IN CANADA



LAKES – SOURCES OF LIFE

They are thousands, sometimes even several million years old, some are even made by man – lakes. They provide refuges for animals and humans, are important for biodiversity, have aesthetic value and have inspired numerous myths and legends. But although their discovery has only just begun, these wonderful water worlds are threatened by pollution, sewage and waste, overfishing and illegal development. In the far north of Europe (Finland's Lake Saimaa), in the central European lowlands (Hungary's Lake Balaton), in Europe's southwest (Alqueva reservoir in Portugal) and in the highlands of Anatolia (Lake Van), we find out more about the special features of various large lakes and their importance for the ecosystem. The series highlights the problems these habitats face in the 21st century, but also the strategies that are being employed to preserve them. This is a captivating four-part series full of stunning landscape shots and unusual discoveries and insights into unique natural wonders far from the tourist hotspots.

Series / Nature

Films by Sebastian Saam

Length 4x52' / 4x45'

Co-production HANFGARN & UFER with ZDF/ARTE

Original title Stille Wasser

Year 2023

Episodes Lake Saimaa in Finland – Working for Biodiversity / Lake Balaton in Hungary – Maintaining the Ecological Balance / Alqueva Reservoir in Portugal – Fighting Desertification / Lake Van in Turkey – Discovering Secrets, Protecting the Environment

From Finland to Anatolia, we discover great lakes and their importance for the ecosystem. These habitats are often at risk. What strategies are there to preserve these bodies of water?

LONG-DISTANCE SWIMMER – SARA MARDINI

At 20, Sara was already famous. She fled Syria in 2015 with her younger sister Yusra. When their boat broke down as they were crossing the sea to Greece, Sara and Yusra and two others jumped into the waves and swam alongside the boat for three and a half hours to stop it from capsizing, saving the lives of everyone on board. Their journey made headlines around the world, and is dramatized in a Netflix film called *The Swimmers*. Our story begins when the fictionalised drama ends. Sara has spent three years rescuing refugees on the same journey that made her famous, but is suddenly arrested in August 2018, charged by Greek authorities with “international espionage and people smuggling”. If convicted, she faces up to 25 years in prison and the end of her humanitarian career. Banned from Lesbos and waiting for news of the trial, she lives a surreal existence in Berlin. Studying at a liberal arts college by day, escaping to techno clubs at night, she tries to reconnect with her family, while Yusra trains for the Tokyo 2021 Olympics, a dream the two sisters once shared. Shot over a period of three years, the film follows Sara’s fight for justice and journey of self-discovery.

One moment champion Syrian swimmer Sara Mardini is Europe’s most celebrated refugee and humanitarian, the next she is a “criminal mastermind”, awaiting trial and a possible 25-year prison sentence.

Feature Documentary / Human Interest

Film by Charly W. Feldman

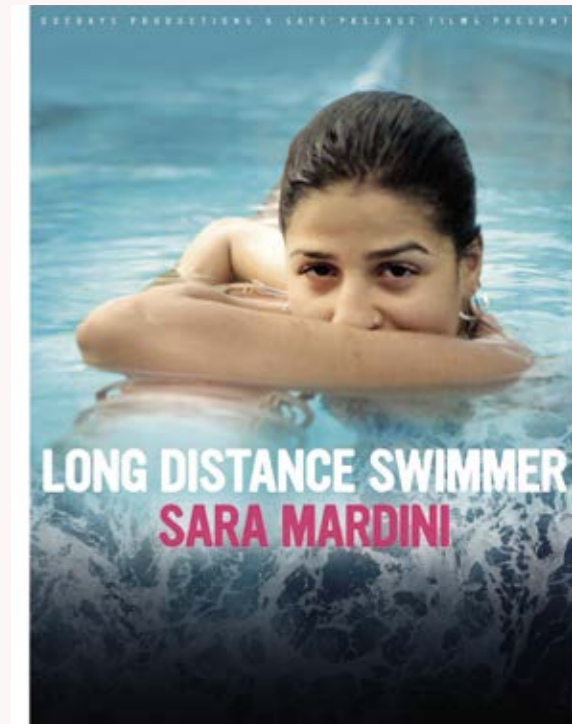
Length 88’ / 52’

Co-production DOCDAYS Productions and Safe Passage Films with SWR/ARTE, with the support of MOIN Filmförderung and The Malik Bendjelloul Memorial Fund

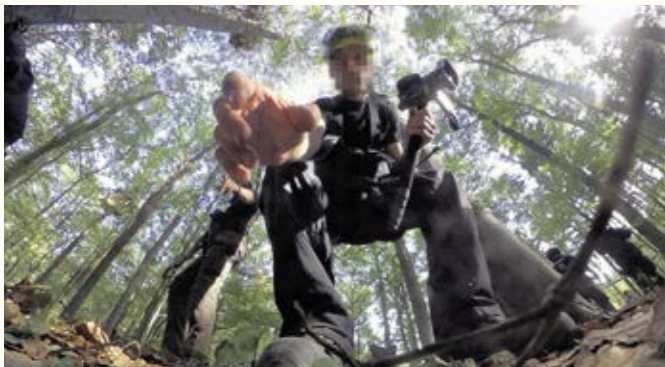
Original title Gegen den Strom – Sara Mardini’s Einsatz für die Menschlichkeit / Sara Mardini – Nager pour l’humanité

Year 2023

Festivals and awards Hot Docs, Canada 2023



**LONG-DISTANCE SWIMMER –
SARA MARDINI**



LONELY OAKS



LONELY OAKS

For the past ten years, environmental activists have been occupying an ancient forest in western Germany which energy company RWE planned to clear to expand the nearby lignite mine. In 2018, the police attempted to take down over 50 tree houses in an operation, courts later declared illegal. In the course of the evictions, a tragic accident occurred. Film student Steffen Meyn, who was filming the events at the site, fell from one of the tree houses and died. This film is based on footage Steffen shot over two years spent in Hambach Forest. We follow him closely via a 360° camera that was rigged to his helmet and get to know the activists who are willing to risk their lives to protect the environment. Steffen is enthusiastic about the environmentalists' solidarity but struggles to take a stance on the radical nature of the protests. For his uncompromising commitment to this cause, he ultimately has to pay with his life. The film offers us some very personal insights and highlights the paradoxes and hardships of an activist's life: political efficacy and self-sacrifice, police violence and militancy, idealism and painful reality.

In the midst of violent clashes between environmental activists and police at Hambach Forest, film student Steffen Meyn was killed in a tragic accident. We chronicle his journey deep into the activists' world.

Feature Documentary / Environment
Film by Fabiana Fragale, Kilian Kuhlendahl, Jens Mühlhoff
Length 102' / 52'
Production MADE IN GERMANY Filmproduktion, with the support of Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media BKM, MOIN Film Fund Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein
Original title Vergiss Meyn Nicht
Year 2023
Festivals and awards Berlin International Film Festival, Germany 2023

Feature Documentary / Environment

HAO ARE YOU

His mother blames communism, his uncle an inheritance dispute, the others remain silent. Film director Dieu Hao Do examines his fragmented family, which has scattered across three continents since the war in Vietnam. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, over 1.5 million people fled the communist regime, forced labour, torture, rape and death. They tried to flee to safety, crossing the South China Sea in small boats; a quarter of a million people drowned, families were torn apart. Many of those who fled the country, like the filmmaker's own family, belonged to Vietnam's Chinese minority. Almost 50 years after their escape, contact between the seven family members has all but broken down. How has the trauma of flight affected the survivors and their children physically and mentally? What has life in exile done to them over the years? Is communism to blame for their estrangement? Dieu Hao Do visits members of his family in Vietnam, Hong Kong, California and Germany. A road trip into the history of Vietnam after the withdrawal of the Americans: emotional, sobering, insightful, sad and uplifting.

Fifty years after their escape from Saigon, film director Dieu Hao Do visits his mother's estranged siblings in Vietnam, Hong Kong, California and Germany. How have the years in exile affected them?

Feature Documentary

Film by Dieu Hao Do

Length 94' / 52'

Co-production HANFGARN & UFER

Filmproduktion with ZDF – Das kleine Fernsehspiel with the support of nordmedia and Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg

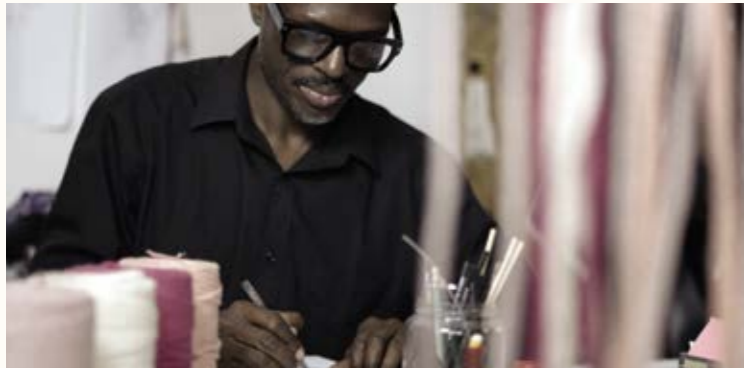
Original title Hao Are You

Year 2023

Festivals and awards Filmfestival Max Ophüls Preis, Germany 2023 / Achtung Berlin Filmfestival, Germany 2023



HAO ARE YOU



AFRICAN STYLES

For a long time, designers from Africa or with African roots were rarely presented on the catwalks of the western fashion world. But today, they are enjoying considerable critical acclaim in Paris, London and New York. Whether streetwear or haute couture, they are redefining traditional African fabrics and textile techniques with avantgarde designs, using socially and ecologically sustainable production techniques and representing a modern, confident Africa. Politically, they are attuned to the spirit of our times. Demands for equal rights for people of colour, which have grown louder all over the world not just since the Black Lives Matter movement, are also echoed in fashion. Lagos-based Adebayo Oke-Lawal challenges gender roles with his Orange Culture label, Senegalese designer Selly Raby Kane blurs borders between fashion and art, while in Cape Town, Lukhanyo Mdingi's fashion brand focuses on social responsibility. The designers want to create local, economically sustainable structures. It's all about jobs and education. In Dakar, fashion designer Sophie Nzinga has opened West Africa's first school for fashion design. Until recently, most creative people have been self-taught.

Lifestyle

Film by Rabi Yansané,
Emmanuelle Wagner, Rolf Lambert

Length 60'/52' 4K

Co-production Along Mekong Productions
with RBB/ARTE

Original title African Styles

Year 2023

The future of fashion is made in Africa. African designers are winning awards and appearing at fashion shows throughout the western world. A diverse and confident scene focused on new codes and social change.

HONG KONG – CENSORSHIP. PROTEST. ART.

Hong Kong has gone quiet since the violent protests in 2019. The National Security Law is restricting democratic rights. And the Chinese government's increasing encroachment has driven hundreds of thousands into exile, including artist Kacey Wong, who fled to Taiwan to continue his protest actions from there. But many people have made the conscious decision to stay put. They're finding different ways to escape censorship or arrest. Internationally renowned multimedia artist Samson Young, for example, plays with codes and hidden references. Not everyone understands the critical statements he makes in his complex installations. Filmmaker Kiwi Chow risks arrest with his documentary *Revolution of Our Times*. Using a special trick, he manages to remain a free man and continues to make films in Hong Kong. The new multimedia museum M+ is emblematic of the balancing act between artistic freedom and censorship. The 60,000 m² museum for contemporary art is Hong Kong city government's new prestige building. But the shiny façade is marred by accusations of censorship, and it's not just about Ai Weiwei's middle finger.

Bit by bit, critical art is being eliminated in Hong Kong. How do creatives deal with censorship and arrest? Are they giving in or fighting back? This film shows how, despite everything, artists continue to protest.

Current Affairs / Arts & Culture

Film by Minh An Szabó de Bucs

Length 52'

Co-production Medea Film Factory with
NDR/ARTE, with the support of nordmedia –
Film- und Mediengesellschaft
Niedersachsen/Bremen

Original title Hong Kong – Zensur. Protest.
Kunst / Hong Kong – Censure. Contestation.
Culture

Year 2023



HONG KONG –
CENSORSHIP. PROTEST. ART.



SWITZERLAND AT NIGHT

Watching from above, a unique spectacle of light and darkness starts after the sun has set. This three-part documentary series shows stunning aerial shots of Switzerland at night and tells stories that are only possible under the veil of darkness. Spectacular footage allows us to observe nocturnal life during the different seasons. In the first episode, a full moon illuminates the snow-capped peaks of the Alps on an enchanting winter's journey from the Engadin to Lake Geneva. We accompany night-time ski tours, military trainee schools and dogsled races. The second episode takes us from the *dolce vita* of Ticino to the business and cultural centres in Basel's border triangle. We peek over the shoulders of border guards, bakers and bat researchers. In episode three, our flight across night-time Switzerland continues from the shores of Lake Constance via Zurich to French-speaking western Switzerland. There, we watch insect researchers, railway workers and street artists. These stories of night workers are paired with spectacular aerial shots of places we've heard about but never seen. An outstanding series full of fascinating stories and magnificent pictures.

From the Engadin to Lake Geneva, we explore night-time Switzerland on a fascinating journey from dusk to dawn. An outstanding series full of fascinating stories and spectacular aerial shots.

Series

Films by Anja Reiss, Marcus Fischötter, Rainer Wolf

Length 3x50'/95'

Co-production Slaughterhouse and doc.station for SRF

Original title Nacht in der Schweiz – Die Highlights

Year 2020

Episodes Summer / Autumn / Winter

KANT – THE EXPERIMENT OF FREEDOM

Immanuel Kant, born in Königsberg in 1724, was already one of the key Enlightenment thinkers during his lifetime and is still one of the most influential figures in Western philosophy today. Kant never left his native Königsberg: he learned all he knew about world affairs from the books that were sent over to him from England and France. Everything he knew about people was the result of the relentless observation of his environment and his own emotional life. He combined all this knowledge into a complex system of concepts, categories and matrices. This film shows for the first time Kant's close connection to his birthplace Königsberg, taking us back to the 18th century using sophisticated animation techniques.

History / Philosophy

Film by Wilfried Hauke

Length 52'

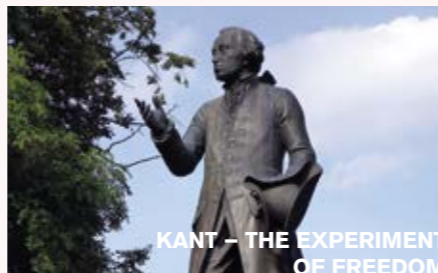
Production IDA Film & TV Produktion for ZDF/ARTE with the support of the Bundeskunsthalle

Original title Kant – Das Experiment der Freiheit

IN PRODUCTION

Delivery 2024

Three hundred years after the birth of philosopher Immanuel Kant in April 2024, this documentary takes us back to 18th century Königsberg in Prussia.



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