

SNOW | SCHNEE

Director's statement

Snow is one of Austria's most important resources. Snow is the basis for winter tourism that generates enormous revenues for the country. Yet snow is also a resource for imagination. Austrian athletes become the standard bearers of 'national' self-confidence and identity by making it to the top of the world league only thanks to the white element.

Snow is also the raw material for my cinematic work with image and sound. Snow crunches; snow shines; snow alights from the sky; snow muffles sounds; snow stands for cold; snow oscillates between various colour tones; snow whitewashes landscapes.

I collect these impressions, and arrange them by moods. Together with sound artist Christian Fennesz I rummage through the field recordings of sounds and images, relying on calm montage, on the moods inscribed onto the material; I trust the immediate power and emotion of the material found and recorded. I like minimalist aesthetics, reductive pared-down form, concentrated focus.

Shooting location was the Semmering region, about 60 miles south of Vienna. This ski region is now marketed under the brand Magic Mountain. As a child I would carve my first turns in the snow on the Semmering. Fifty years ago, white splendour was abundant, while today the region depends on snow guns to secure the coveted white cover. However, rising temperatures are increasingly spoiling the sport. The prevailing mood is melancholic. Winter tourism in a region on an altitude of merely 3000 ft must perhaps face its own impending demise, with various signs pointing to that future already beginning to show.

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