



# WALDEN

A SLOW DOWN ROAD MOVIE

A film by Daniel Zimmermann

Written and Directed by Daniel Zimmermann / Produced by Aline Schmid / Artistic collaboration Bernhard Braunstein, Gerald Kerkletz, Amanda Piña / Cinematography Gerald Kerkletz, Michael Krischan / Editing Bernhard Braunstein / Sound Recording Klaus Kellermann / Re-recording mixer Bernhard Maisch, Tremens Film / Color grading Andi Winter / Compositing Matthias Halibrand / Line producer Europe Marlene Gunst / Service Production Brazil Tardo Filmes, Ticiano Augusto Lima / Line Producers Brazil Jeronimo Lemos, Tiago Melo / Graphic Design Thomas Rhyner • A Beauvoir Films production in coproduction with Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen • [www.walden-film.com](http://www.walden-film.com)



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# WALDEN

A SLOW DOWN ROAD MOVIE

by Daniel Zimmermann

(CH, 2018, 106 Min)

## PRESSKIT

Information:

[www.beauvoirfilms.ch](http://www.beauvoirfilms.ch) / [www.walden-film.com](http://www.walden-film.com)

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/277095232>

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# SYNOPSIS

In the forest of the Catholic Monastery of Admont in Austria a fir tree is felled and processed into planks of wood. By train, truck, boat and finally by hand, the stack is transported to a mysterious destination right in the heart of the Brazilian rainforest. The wooden planks' trajectory corresponds to one of the central, raw materials trade routes, however in reversed direction of transport.

The film is a meditative and subtle comment on the absurdity of the economic rationale that underlies our globalised world. Each sequence of shots corresponds to a stage in the process. By means of thirteen 360-degree shots, the Swiss filmmaker Daniel Zimmermann clears a paradoxical pathway into the logic of globalised trade routes.

## FILMMAKER'S COMMENTARY

*«I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.»*

Henry David Thoreau (Walden, 1854)

**WALDEN** is a meticulously flowing, cosmopolitan reflection, that by example of an international trade route provides hyper realistic insights into different working worlds. With a constant slow pace, the camera turns on its own axis. This extreme slowing-down sensitizes the viewer into a trancelike observation of

details. This unusually cautious scanning of the surroundings is an invitation to reflect in-depth upon the different socio-political realities and world views. The starting point of the journey, the Admont forest symbolizes a Western viewpoint, the final destination in the Amazon rainforest, an animist world of imagination. **WALDEN** doesn't counter these two world views against each other, but instead transforms and connects them through precise staging, all along the transport route.

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*Sometimes you have to go to the forest to get a different view on our society like Henry Thoreau did and how he describes in his book 'Walden'.*

*Sometimes you have to do the things in an opposite direction to change your own perspective.*

*Sometimes you have to learn from other cultures to understand that there are existing different values.*

*Sometimes you have to slow down to observe what is surrounding us.*

*Sometimes you need civil disobedience to change the power structure in a system.*

*And sometimes you have to make a movie about all this.*



# WALDEN STILLS





# WALDEN STILLS



# INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL ZIMMERMANN

How did this film originate? In your last film, wooden planks also became an artistic resource.

The impulse for **WALDEN** came about while I was researching my last short film **STICK CLIMBING**. While searching for a suitable rock face in Styria, we spent the night in Admont. There, we not only came in contact with the monastery itself, but also with questions about different ideologies and social systems. Where in **STICK CLIMBING** individual wooden ledges vertically marked their trajectory along an, as yet unexploited route, in **WALDEN** an entire stack of wood is being transported horizontally across several thousand kilometres.

Hugely important for my **WALDEN**-project was also a trip we undertook in the same year with the choreographer Amanda Piña into the Amazon. We wanted to get to know cultures within Latin America, whose point of view would differ greatly from a Western perspective. The forest is home to indigenous communities who are unfamiliar with production surplus, waste or pollution problems. Power there isn't delegated to just a few, decisions instead are made collectively and their consequences in turn equally shared. Typical for such a collective world view is also that animals, plants and even what from a Western perspective would

be considered inanimate natural phenomena, are bestowed with a subjective and intentional quality. Animals as well as objects, are regarded as «people» each with their own «perspective». My film **WALDEN** aims to connect these differing world views in content, as well as form.

To what extent were you inspired by the book «Walden, or, Life in the Woods» by the US-American author Henry David Thoreau?

The title and subject of the film ties it to the book. In «Walden», Thoreau describes his life in a log cabin, to which he withdrew in 1845 for over two years, in order to turn his back on the industrialized mass society of the young United States. For him it wasn't a naïve act of escapism from the world, but instead an intent to make an alternative and balanced way of life a reality. The chapters in the book, like the sequences in the film are dedicated to different aspects of human existence. Containing, for example, reflections on the global economy, on loneliness, or thoughts on the meaning of art in life. I especially find the part about civil disobedience important – to allow oneself to be led by one's own ideas, undeterred and without violence, even in the face of exterior adversity. That's the connection I make.

How did you get the idea for the continually rotating 360-degree camera?  
How did you shoot?

The slow-paced, mechanical panning through singular, everyday situations invites the viewer to take his time, to actively observe. With that, I tried to create a neutral, uniform representation of all events. The sequence shots are created by a panning camera that steadily turns at the same speed over 360-degrees, on its own axis. Thereby my dramaturgical-choreographic experience – as was the case in **STICK CLIMBING** – from the realm of performance theatre becomes part of the realization of the film. The notion of a partially staged reality influences the narrative and theme of the individual film sequences. The positioning of the camera and the effect of choreography, thus create an unusual, hyper realistic narrative of this idea of palpation. The scenes subtly correspond to one another. The filming locations in Europe connect to their Brazilian counterparts through their similarities – the visible effects of

globalisation. We meticulously prepared every shot, which meant a huge logistical effort. But thanks to prior research trips, where we defined the exact filming locations, it was possible to film with a relatively reduced crew.

How did you finance such a complex and costly film project?

Through my previous films and actions, I met the producer Aline Schmid in Geneva. With her, we financed the project in Switzerland, which wasn't always easy. Swiss Television believed in this adventure from the very beginning, which surely helped its financing. Also, several foundations and regional film subsidies played a role in the financing of this project.

And where is the stack of wood now?

It is now back in Europe. As a witness to the absurd journey, the stack of wood will be exhibited in Admont in 2019, to be followed by further installations in other museums and galleries.



# DANIEL ZIMMERMANN

is a visual artist, dramaturge and filmdirector. Originally trained as wood sculptor, he works on film, installation and performance art. His works are based on a fictional actionism located between visual and performance art. In his works he responds to situations and environments and through installation, performance and film rises questions related to the meaning and sustainability of human actions. He has initiated and realized numerous art projects in museums, galleries as well as in public space. His projects also comprise films that have been shown at renowned inter-

national film festivals, such as Berlinale, International Film Festival Rotterdam and Sundance Film Festival. He has received numerous awards and grants for his films and art projects. He founded together with Amanda Piña 2005 the artist association *nadaproductions*, 2009 the art and performance space *nadalokal* and in the same year the *Austrian Ministry of Movement Affairs (BMfB)*. Currently he works on the realisation of the project *Endangered Human Movements* and on the slow down road movie **WALDEN**.

## FILMOGRAPHY

- Go and talk to your government, 11 min, 2012
- Stick Climbing, 14 min, 2010
- Lauberhornrennen im Sommer, 5 min, 2007
- Bobrennen im Sommer, 3 min, 2002

[www.danielzimmermann.org](http://www.danielzimmermann.org)

[www.nadaproductions.at](http://www.nadaproductions.at)

[www.nadalokal.at](http://www.nadalokal.at) / [www.bmfb.at](http://www.bmfb.at)



# CREDITS

Written and directed by

Daniel Zimmermann

Produced by

Aline Schmid  
Beauvoir Films

Artistic & visual concept  
in collaboration with

Bernhard Braunstein  
Gerald Kerklet  
Amanda Piña

Cinematography  
Camera technician

Gerald Kerklet  
Michael Krischan

Sound Recording

Klaus Kellermann

Sound Design

Karoline Heflin

Editing

Bernhard Braunstein

Foley Artist

Sabine Hasicka

Re-recording mixer

Bernhard Maisch, Tremens Film

Colours

Andi Winter

Compositing

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Magistratsabteilung 7 – Kultur – Stadt Wien  
Stadt Solothurn  
Däster-Schild Stiftung

Length

106 min

Original language

no dialogue

Format

DCP, 50 fps

# BEAUVOIR FILMS

was founded in 2016 in Geneva. Beauvoir produces high-quality, author-driven documentary and fiction features for festival and theatrical releases as well as TV. We work with directors, who have a distinct visual narrative approach and strive to push the boundaries of storytelling in compelling and creative ways. The film *WALDEN* by Daniel Zimmermann won 2018 the Special Jury Award at Karlovy Vary and *CLOSING TIME* by Nicole Vögele was awarded a Leopard (Prix du Jury, Cinéastes du présent) at Locarno Festival 2018.



After graduating from the University of Freiburg in social sciences, Aline Schmid studied scriptwriting in Stuttgart. She worked as Head of Distribution for arthouse distributor Cineworx, as well as Managing Director at Cinema Tous Ecrans Film Festival in Geneva. Associated as a Producer at Intermezzo Films (Geneva) from 2011 to 2016, she has produced several creative documentaries and fiction features with international success, such as *SONITA* (Sundance / IDFA), *BROKEN LAND* (Locarno / Rotterdam), *CANTOS* (Dok.Munich / Mostra Sao Paulo) and *HORIZONTES* (Karlovy Vary / Guadalajara). She participated in the programs Emerging Producer (Jihlava 2013) and Producer on the Move (Cannes 2015). She founds Beauvoir Films in 2016.



After the documentary *MAIS IM BUNDESHUUS – CORN IN PARLIAMENT* in 2000, Adrian Blaser works as production manager for many international cinema projects, for example *CLEVELAND VS WALL STREET* (Cannes 2010), *HOME* by Ursula Meier etc. In 2007, he produces a series of audiovisual works at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade. Having collaborated on numerous films by the founders of Bande à part Films in Lausanne (Ursula Meier, Lionel Baier, Jean-Stéphane Bron, Frédéric Mermoud), he becomes their executive producer in 2011 (*THE BLOCHER EXPERIENCE*, *MOKA*, *THE PARIS OPERA* etc.). He joins Beauvoir Films in 2017.

Both are members of the Swiss Film Academy and the European Film Academy EFA.

## Filmography BEAUVOIR FILMS

*THE GIRL & THE SPIDER* by Ramon & Silvan Zürcher, Fiction 90', in postproduction, release 2020/21

*CLOSING TIME* by Nicole Vögele (2018), Doc Cinéma 116', Coproduction with Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg. Léopard (Jury Award Cinéastes du présent) at Locarno Festival 2018 / Prix Festival Scope 2018. Festivals: IDFA / RIDM / Art of the Real / etc.

*WALDEN* by Daniel Zimmermann (2018), Doc Cinéma 106', Coproduction with SRF. Special Jury Prize at Karlovy Vary 2018 / Award for best Swiss Film at Zurich Film Festival 2018. Festivals: Sundance 2019 / Viennale / Rotterdam / etc.

*EIN KUNSTPROJEKT - WALDEN* by Daniel Zimmermann (2018), Doc TV 50', SRF Sternstunde 2018.

*1999 (WISH YOU WERE HERE)* by Samara Grace Chadwick (2017), Doc Cinéma 90', Coproduction with Parabola (CAN), SRF, NFB. Festivals: Visions du Réel / Hotdocs / BAFICI / etc.

*TYPIQUEMENT SUISSE ?* by Matthias Günter & Andy Herzog (2016), Doc TV 2 x 52', Coproduction with Lomotion, SRG SSR, prime time broadcasting SRF/RTS/RSI.

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*THE POWER OF SILENCE (MARCEL MARCEAU)* by Maurizius Staerkle Drux, Doc Cinéma 90', Coproduction with Lichtblick Film Köln, ZDF-ARTE, SRF/RTS, in postproduction, release autumn 2020

*ECHE SCHWEIZER* by Luka Popadić, Doc Cinéma 90', Coproduction with SRF/RTS, in production, release 2021

*LES HISTOIRES D'AMOUR DE LIV S.* by Anna Luif, Fiction 90', in production

*ŠIRIRI - THE CARDINAL & THE IMAM* by Manuel von Stürler, Doc Cinéma 90', in financing

*MICHEL COMTE NEW LIGHT* by Ophélie Giomataris, Doc TV 52', in financing

*CHARMING MARY* by Arne Kohlweyer, Fiction 90', in financing

*THE WHITE CLUB* by Michele Pennetta, Fiction 90', in development

*DER WURF* by Daniel Zimmermann, Non-Fiction 90', in development