



**Karlovy Vary**  
**International Film Festival**  
Documentary  
Special Jury Prize

# 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>

Contact

Production: Beauvoir Films  
12 Rue des Deux-Ponts  
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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.*

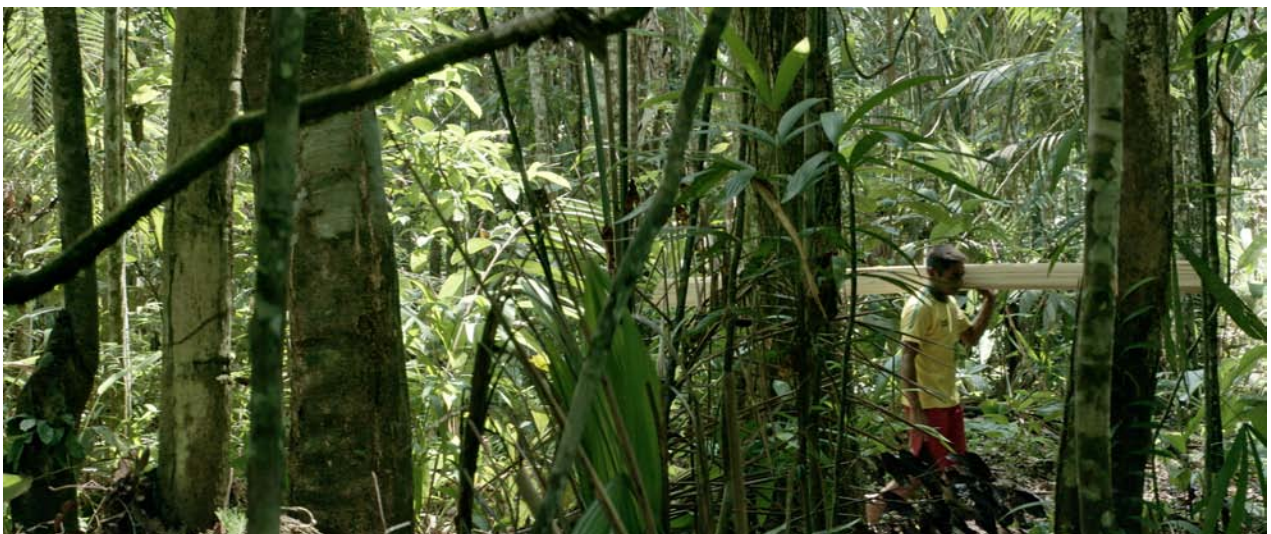


# WALDEN STILLS





# 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 international 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 nada-productions, 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.

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

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

[www.nadalokal.at](http://www.nadalokal.at) | [www.bmf.at](http://www.bmf.at)

# FILMOGRAPHY

- GO AND TALK TO YOUR GOVERNMENT, 11 min, 2012
- STICK CLIMBING, 14 min, 2010
- DOWNHILL SKIING IN SUMMER / LAUBERHORNRENNEN IM SOMMER, 5 min, 2007
- BOBSLEIGH RACING IN SUMMER / BOBRENNEN IM SOMMER, 3 min, 2002

# CREDITS

Written and directed by	Daniel Zimmermann	In Coproduction with	· Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen
Produced by	Aline Schmid Beauvoir Films	With the support of	· Bundesamt für Kultur (BAK) · Cinéforum et Loterie Romande · Teleproduktions-Fonds · Kanton Luzern · Aargauer Kuratorium · Fachausschuss Film & Medienkunst BS / BL · Kanton Zug · Berner Filmförderung · Ernst Göhner Stiftung · Jubiläumsstiftung der Schweizerischen Mobiliar Genossenschaft · Magistratsabteilung 7 - Kultur - Stadt Wien · Stadt Solothurn · Däster-Schild Stiftung
Artistic & visual concept in collaboration with	Bernhard Braunstein Gerald Kerkletz Amanda Piña		
Cinematography	Gerald Kerkletz		
Camera technician	Michael Krischan		
Editing	Bernhard Braunstein		
Sound Recording	Klaus Kellermann		
Sound Desig	Karoline Heflin		
Foley Artist	Sabine Hasicka		
Re-recording mixer	Bernhard Maisch, Tremens Film		
Colours	Andi Winter		
Compositing	Matthias Halibrand		
Graphic Design	Thomas Rhyner		
Artistic Consultants	Thomas Bachmann Christian Müller Meinhard Rauchensteiner		
Length	106 min		
Original language	no dialogue		
Format	DCP		

# FILMOGRAPHY BEAUVOIR FILMS

Beauvoir Films was founded in 2016 by Aline Schmid in Geneva (Switzerland). In 2017 Adrian Blaser joined the company. Beauvoir Films produce high-quality, author-driven documentary and fiction features for festival and theatrical release, as well as TV. Beauvoir Films work with directors, who have a distinct visual narrative approach and strive to push the boundaries of storytelling in compelling and creative ways.

Aline Schmid has worked as the Head of Distribution for the arthouse distributor Cineworx, as well as Managing Director at Cinema Tous Ecrans Film Festival in Geneva. As an associate producer at Intermezzo Films (Geneva) from 2011 to 2016, she 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).

## Current Productions:

- WALDEN by Daniel Zimmermann, Coproduction with SRF, with the support of BAK / Cinéforum / Kt Bern / Kt BS / Aargauer Kuratorium / various foundations. Premiere: Karlovy Vary, Documentary Competition 2018.
- CLOSING TIME by Nicole Vögele, Coproduction with Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg, with the support of BAK / Cinéforum / Aargauer Kuratorium. Premiere Summer 2018.
- 1999 (WISH YOU WERE HERE) by Samara Grace Chadwick, Doc, 90 min. Coproduction with Parabola (CAN), SRF, NFB distribution, Worldsales: Cat & Docs, CH-release Xenix 2018. Premiere Visions du Réel / Hot Docs, 2018.
- TYPIQUEMENT SUISSE? by Matthias Günter & Andy Herzog (2016), TV doc 2x 52 min. Coproduction with Lomotion, SRG SSR, prime time-broadcasting SRF/RTS/RSI 2017.
- DAS MÄDCHEN UND DIE SPINNE by Ramon & Silvan Zürcher, Fiction 90 min. Coproduction with Komplizen Film (D), with the support of BAK / Cinéforum, in pre-production.
- DIE MACHT DER STILLE / Marcel Marceau by Maurizius Staerke Drux, Dok 90/52 min. Coproduction with Lichtblick Film Köln, ZDF/ARTE, with the support of MEDIA / BAK / ZFS / SRF Sternstunde, in production.
- ECHTE SCHWEIZER by Luka Popadić, Doc cinéma, with the support of BAK / ZFS / Aargauer Kuratorium, in production