

STRATA (2024)

by VestAndPage, 75 min.

4k Digital, 16:9, colour, stereo/5.1 Dolby Surround

English with subtitles in English and German

LOGLINE

In a film of philosophical, poetic action, a collective of contemporary artists root out the liminal, spectral and ritual of art in prehistoric Ice Age caves.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

The hybrid of performance art and film shows caves as proto-spaces for altered states and sites of knowledge-making and human becoming. In philosophical, poetic action, a collective of contemporary artists root out the liminal, spectral and ritual of art in prehistoric caves.

SYNOPSIS

“STRATA” is the fifth hybrid of performance art and film by artist duo VestAndPage. It is a film of philosophical, poetic action shot in 2021, to be released in 2024. STRATA explores caves as proto-spaces for altered states and sites of knowledge-making and human becoming. It takes place in prehistoric Swabian Jura caves used by Ice Age humans for shelter about 33,000 to 43,000 years ago. At these finding sites of the oldest known examples of human figurative artworks, VestAndPage convene in an interdisciplinary gathering of contemporary artists and scientists to challenge central existential and social issues. The caves are the symbiotic realms to dance between embodiment and scrutiny, the unseen and the unforeseen, the oppressed and unspoken, the forgotten and the repressed.

Coming together to look into the river of human civilisation and to share what they had found, the artists irradiate concepts of time, ecological intelligence and politics through performances for the camera. The film pinholes a perspective on a world where art, science and multiple voices and perspectives nourish each other in co-creative processes. Nestled inside the dark subsurfaces of the land, the artists confront romantically distorted images of nature and naturalness to dismantle consolidated narratives and aesthetics. The human body and stratified societies are tied in continuity to the geological, beheld through a lens of queer ecology.

CREDITS

Directed, written and produced by VestAndPage (Verena Stenke & Andrea Pagnes)

With Verena Stenke, Andrea Pagnes, Marcel Sparmann, Andreas Bauer Kanabas, Stephan Knies, Ralf Peters, Boris Nieslony, Aldo Aliprandi, Maite Weins, Susanne Weins, Anguezomo Mba Bikoro, Marianna Andrigo, Francesca Fini, Nicola Fornoni, Giorgia De Santi, Enok Ripley, Fenia Kotsopoulou, Sara Simeoni, Saúl García-López

Director of Photography: Verena Stenke, daz disley, Fenia Kotsopoulou

Sound Design + Audio Arts: Douglas Quin

Location sound: Douglas Quin, Verena Stenke, Philipp Seitz

Lighting Director + Colour Grading: daz disley

Editor: Verena Stenke

Costume Designer: VestAndPage, Balaustio

Set Director + Drone Operator: Giovanni Dantomio

Music Composers: Aldo Aliprandi, Franz Schubert, J. S. Bach, John Dowland, Pyur, Woob

Environments: Sirgensteiner Cave, Hohle Fels, Kleine Grotte, Falkensteiner Cave, Gustav Jakob Cave, Wimsener Cave, Schiller Cave, Bären Cave, Hohlenstein-Stadel, Blautopf
Text: Andrea Pagnes
Text Editing: Aisha Pagnes
Production Assistance: Marcel Sparmann
Still Photographer: Fenia Kotsopoulou, Marcel Sparmann
Additional Appearance: Dagmar Stenke, Elisabeth Szirniks, Christel Wittmann
Scientific Consultancy + Philosophical Inspiration: Timothy Morton, Stefanie Kölbl, Nicolas Conard, Kurt Wehrberger, Guido Bataille, Johannes Wittmann, Barbara Spreer, Bernhard Stumpfhaus, Rudolf Walter, University of Exeter Research Network "Rock/Body: Performative Interfaces between the Geologic and the Body", Nigel Clarke, João Florêncio.

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A VestAndPage Production © 2024

ARTIST BIO

Since 2006, German artist Verena Stenke and Venetian-born artist and writer Andrea Pagnes have been working together as VestAndPage internationally in performance art, performance-based film, writing, publishing and temporary artistic community projects.

Since 2010, they have been devoted to experimental performance-based filmmaking, producing four feature-length films, a silent film, a trilogy of shorts, and numerous other shorts, art videos and interview series. In 2020, they published their manifesto on performance-based filmmaking: "Poetics of Relations".

They are the founders and directors of the Venice International Performance Art Week, and their poetic writings and research articles have been extensively published and translated for international readers. They share their methodology on performance-based filmmaking and collaborative performance and in masterclasses at art academies worldwide.

www.vest-and-page.de / IG: @vestandpage

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

We have been devoted to experimental performance-based filmmaking through which to examine the evolution from original documentation of performative acts toward complexly contextual, non-linear storytelling. Our film works are produced on-site as direct and visceral performances, which are never rehearsed or staged and happen in response to often extreme environments "familiar as a dream" (*London City Nights*) such as Antarctica, Patagonia, Kashmir, secluded areas, underground cave systems or military enclaves. We usually work alone or with a small team of collaborators and use minimal non-invasive equipment.

In a constant search through a reflexive mode for new images of interior landscapes, we consider the world our studio and host. We do not go to a place to tell a story; we go to a place to find its story. This approach contains the essential discourse of decolonisation — the land holds us; we never own land. All

persons, beings, spaces, environments or non-human bodies are equal partakers in the co-creation of a film.

Our films are outcomes of broad creative experience and research processes in which we explore “thin places”—locations-in-between, where the veil between different temporalities, occurrences and stories is porous. To perform in these thresholds where the visible blends with the invisible, we have developed a psychogeographical method to activate memory and uncover layers of information and imagery stored in the human body, psyche, spirit, and environment.

In our ongoing “Poetics of Relations”, we apply endurance, sublimation and risk-taking with a poetic bodily approach to art practice and a focus on universal human experiences. We consider performance-based filmmaking an artistic practice that serves the body’s capacity to generate knowledge, convey meanings and shape concepts of intimate archiving, with the perceptual acting as a lens on how we view reality and the spectrum of relationships to address the social nature of representation. For us, film can delude space-time, open the unconscious as a resourceful vessel, and reveal processes and relations by linking apparently disconnected persons, objects and happenings.

Our production process involves recollecting different elements or “shards”: a series of disconnected filmed, non-staged performance actions, poetic texts produced as stream-of-consciousness writing, foley sounds and elaborate musical soundscapes. In assembling them, these shards are placed together organically in the editing process. The new whole that is the film work aims to reveal the existing connections between these previously scattered fragments. Reduced use of digital effects such as dissolve, reverse and layering serves to unveil perceptions of realities that are not feasible in real life but that we consider elemental.

Rooted both in film history and performance art history, our aesthetic has been termed magical realism, surrealist, hyperrealist, and psychomagical. It reflects the poetic and conceptual influences of masters such as Maya Deren, Béla Tarr, Agnès Varda, Sergei Parajanov, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Godfrey Reggio or Werner Herzog.

We further commit to film as a mnemonic archive for testimonial purposes and produce conversations and interviews on existential topics with people from the arts, culture and science.

PRESS IMAGES DOWNLOAD

The **film poster** and a selection of 10 **stills from the film** and 10 **behind-the-scenes** images can be downloaded in resolution for web and print from our [Cloud-storage](#).

Please add the following credit upon publication:

Still/Behind the scene from the film STRATA © VestAndPage / (+names as in image title) 2021