

OLIVER RESSLER



The Fittest Survive

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A video by Oliver Ressler

23 min., HD, AT 2006

"Risk" and "danger", "disaster" and "wilderness" are no longer the disavowed flipside of the globalisation dream. These erstwhile deterrents are factors to be calculated, mastered, hedged and traded by the best and strongest: a "challenge", an "opportunity" and a useful test of the ruthlessness required from economic "achievers". Crisis regions are growth areas: *frontier markets* multiply the blood spilled on former colonial frontiers. The essentially warlike character of market economics *demands the impossible*, making life a battleground where the stakes of "satisfactory performance" are murderous and suicidal.



"The Fittest Survive". Installation view: "Traurig sicher, im Training", Grazer Kunstverein / Steirischer Herbst, Graz, 2006

Private security companies prepare state and corporate clients for this sudden-death Social Darwinism in bespoke civilian training programs that mimic conflict situations of varying complexity up to and including warfare. The website of one of these armed educational institutions, the British AKE Group, promises clients "the competitive advantage of engaging safely in areas that might otherwise have been closed to opportunity".

AKE has spent over a decade showing multi-national clients how to assess and mitigate risks and stay safe and effective. We deliver internationally acclaimed security and political risk management, which includes hostile environments training, skills, intelligence, equipment and services - giving clients the competitive advantage of engaging safely in areas that might otherwise have been closed to opportunity.



"The Fittest Survive", still



"The Fittest Survive", still



"The Fittest Survive", still



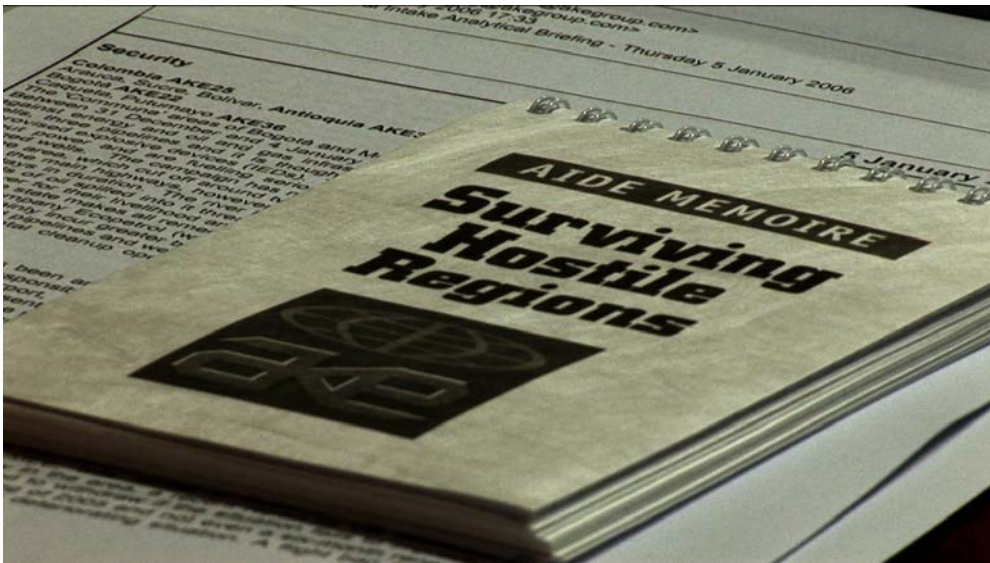
"The Fittest Survive", still

The video "The Fittest Survive" is based on footage of the five-day course "Surviving Hostile Regions", run by AKE Group in Wales (UK) in January 2006. The course instructors are former soldiers of the British Special Forces. Some of the participants are executives preparing for business in Iraq or other dangerous regions. Some are government officials on their way to the new protectorates. Still others are journalists soon to be formally or otherwise "embedded", which is to say: regardless of personal honesty, their words will appear only when they echo a spurious (historically clueless) discourse of democracy and human rights, helping scorched-earth market expansion on its way.



"The Fittest Survive", still

The video was mostly filmed on hand-held camera. It follows the survival-course participants through a staged "experience" of live shelling, ambush by guerrillas, rescue of accident victims and passage through minefields. British fighter jets flew low over the Welsh training camp, their war games foreshadowing the actual killing grounds where the trainees would soon travel under VIP protection.



"The Fittest Survive", still



"The Fittest Survive", still

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Image Editing: Markus Koessl

Sound Editing: Rudi Gottsberger

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