



Mopani Copper Mines
wird zu 73,1 Prozent von Glencore Xstrata gehalten

The Visible and the Invisible

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A film by Oliver Ressler

20 min., HD, AT/CH 2014

In recent years, Switzerland has become the global center for commodity trading. In no other country are more commodities bought and sold; nevertheless, this crude oil, copper, aluminum, coal or wheat never reaches Swiss territory because the deals are carried out completely in a virtual world. Despite its importance for the Swiss and the global economy, the public knows very little about these secret transactions.



"The Visible and the Invisible". Installation view: "The Plundering" (solo show), Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, 2014

The headquarters of the commodity groups, which are among the most profitable companies in the world, often lie in the upper floors of office buildings in the commodity-hub Geneva or in the case of Glencore Xstrata in the canton of Zug, a tax haven. In these places, the traders go about their profitable business, undisturbed and largely invisible to the public. This relative invisibility in Switzerland lies in contrast with the visible, often catastrophic impact that the mining and trade of raw materials under neocolonial conditions has for people, the environment and the states in the zones of extraction concentrated in the Global South.



"The Visible and the Invisible", still

The film "The Visible and the Invisible," whose title quotes a book of the same name by the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, addresses a relationship of exploitation between the toxic industries and inhumane jobs in the Global South and the gigantic profits from commodity trading in the hands of a few persons in the Global North. The film presents a field of view, obscured by smoke, that also points to the toxic emissions associated with production in southern places; these images are interwoven with images of corporate headquarters located in Switzerland featuring the unprepossessing name plates of Vitol, Traruga, Mercuria, Gunvor, Litasco, Bunge and Louis-Dreyfus. The film thematizes, with reference to commodity trading, how the wealth of the North relates to poverty in the South; it undermines a dominant capitalist myth that northern "victimless" prosperity could not be causally related to southern poverty.



"The Visible and the Invisible", digital print, 119 x 84 cm, 2014

Director, producer and film editor: Oliver Ressler

Narration text: Oliver Ressler

Creative copy-editing: Gene Ray

Narrator: Patrick Lamb

Camera: Thomas Parb, Oliver Ressler

Sound design, re-recording mix and color correction: Rudolf Gottsberger

Title design: Juma Hauser

Music composed for the film by La Gale.

The narration text is partially inspired by Berne Declaration, "Commodities – Switzerland's most dangerous Business"(2012) and Eduardo Galeano, "Open Veins of Latin America" (1973).

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