

Photofilm *water ways /wasser wege*

Duration: 15 minutes

Year of completion: 2011

Subject: The subject of the photofilm *water ways* are religious rituals in five major religions, where water is playing a key role as a mean of spiritual cleaning and healing.

Genesis and Intention: While I was doing research work about the five world religions in the context of my exhibition *between heaven and earth* (May to July 2011 in Hamburg), I realised that there are water rituals found in all religions, and I became interested in finding out more and turning it into a photographic project.

Combining Film and Photography seemed the right way to tell the story, using film mainly for the action and photography for slowing it down or stopping it and thereby focusing on elements beyond the action.

When filming the course of events and taking photographs I didn't intend to document and explain what's happening.

I am rather interested in associative pictures which concentrate on selected parts of the action. I've mainly been looking at the hand's action of the persons involved to focus rather on the relation of mankind and water than on the persons themselves.

Water is the generic element of the film which is leading from one religion to the next, like a river (the Elbe River) that carries religions like boats, from the spring to the open sea.

Structure:

Judaism and Hinduism, the eldest religions of the five, forming the beginning and the end of the photofilm, are framing Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. In the course of this, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all referring to Abraham, are chronologically set one after the other. In consequence, Islam, being the youngest religion, is located in the middle of the film, followed by Buddhism leading back to its roots, Hinduism.

There is no spoken word in this Video. Instead, mostly the original sound (singing, prayer, flowing water, breaking of waves) is set to the action.

Synopsis

1. Forest and spring nearby Hamburg; spring feeding the Este River.

2. Small river (Este), feeding the Elbe River.

3. **Judaism:** Ritual cleaning of newly bought kitchenware for kosher cooking; the cleaning is done in a so called Mikwe, a water basin providing clean spring or rain water for ritual cleaning. The Mikwe is usually situated in the basement of the Synagogue and is used for bathing people and objects.

Location: Synagogue of the Jewish Parish in Bad Segeberg/Hamburg

4. Elbe River in the Port of Hamburg, seen from an old traditional sailing boat where the Greek-Orthodox ceremony is being held celebrating the „Great Water Consecration“.

5. Christianity:

Once a year, in January (one week after the christian feast of Epiphany), the Orthodox Church is celebrating the „Great Water Consecration“, a sacramental service remembering the baptism of Jesus Christ. By throwing a cross three times from the boat into the river, not only the river itself but the whole of creation is blessed.

Location: Port of Hamburg, Rickmer Rickmers (Traditional Sailing Boat); the Greek-Orthodox Parish in Hamburg

6. The Elbe River

7. Islam:

Distribution of holy spring water (Zamzam) from Mekka to Muslims in Hamburg. The spring water's origin is said to come from Paradise and have a healing impact on those drinking it. Pilgrims are drinking it on their pilgrimage to Mekka and bring back small quantities of it to those having to stay at home.

Location: Mescid-i-Aksa-Mosque Hamburg

8. The Elbe River, seen from an icebreaker mooring in the Port of Hamburg

9. Buddhism:

Daily water offerings to the Buddhas: Every morning before meditation offerings of water and fire (candle light and incense) are made to the Buddhas while singing mantras.

Location: Centre of Tibetan Buddhism Hamburg

10. The Elbe River seen from a jetty; a ferry boat arriving.

11. Hinduism:

Shiva-Puja: Once a week one of the most important hindu gods, Shiva, is being worshipped by the faithful in a colourful and lively ceremony. Offerings of different kinds (milk, yoghurt, honey, leaves, sugar, blossoms etc.) are given to lingam, a black stone symbolising Shiva's creative power. It is cleaned over and over by loads of water.

Location: Temple of the Afghan Hindu Community Hamburg

12. The Elbe River, five swans swimming towards the open sea.

13. The open sea: North Sea at the Isle of Spiekeroog, Germany.