

PRESS RELEASE

Snow, great, colossal masses of snow

In honour of the centennial of Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain", the Retrospective of the 66th Nordic Film Days Lübeck (November 6 – 10, 2024) will be dedicated to snow.



Thomas Mann together with his wife Katia and daughter Elisabeth in St. Moritz, around 1930. Picture: ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Thomas- Mann-Archiv/photo: Heinz Niedecken



„Force Majeure“ („Turist“, Sweden 2014) © MUBI

Lübeck, December 7, 2023. The Retrospective of the 2024 Nordic Film Days Lübeck, titled "Snow – of Flakes and Flurries", will tie in to a year-long series of events that the Buddenbrookhaus in Lübeck is mounting to celebrate 100 years since the publication in German of Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain".

Jörg Schöning, curator of the section, explains the link between Mann's book and the subject of the Retrospective. "In the novel, the chapter 'Snow' is considered the central segment of the book. It describes how the protagonist Hans Castorp, during his sixth year at the sanatorium in Davos, acquires snowshoes, learns to ski, and ventures out into the snowy mountains. On one of those trips, he runs into a life-threatening blizzard. He finds refuge in a mountain hut where a dream stirs him to overcome his death wish. That dramatic turning point also marks Thomas Mann's transition from the principle of 'ennobling death' to the 'democratic life concept', making 'Snow' the 'best-known chapter of his novels' not only for literature critic Volker Weidermann ("Mann vom Meer")."

Thomas Mann's descriptions of the natural phenomenon of snow were influenced by works of Nordic literature, among other things – the books of Dane Hans Christian Andersen, Norwegian Knut Hamsun, and Swede Selma Lagerlöf.

In addition to the classic film versions of the relevant work, the Retrospective of the 2024 Nordic Film Days Lübeck will present more than a dozen additional narrative and documentary films that slot into Thomas Mann's "snow, great, colossal masses of snow, more snow than Hans Castorp had ever seen in his life".

Historical films will be screened such as the snowshoe travels of nomadic Sámi families in the recently restored documentary “With Reindeer and Sled in Inka Länta's Winterland” (“Med ackja och ren i Inka Lántas vinterland”, Sweden, 1926, dir: Erik Bergström), or Ruben Östlund’s award-winning “Force Majeure” (“Turist”, Sweden, 2014), a behavioural study of a family on vacation amid a snowy landscape.

Another highlight of the Retrospective will be the festive screening of the silent film “Growth of the Soil” (“Markens grøde”, Norway, 1921, dir: Gunnar Sommerfeldt), from the 1920 Nobel prize-winning book of the same name by Knut Hamsun. That book inspired Thomas Mann to re-work his “Magic Mountain” manuscript, as expressed in the chapter “Snow”. A student ensemble from the Lübeck Academy of Music, led by Professor Franz Danksagmüller will provide live accompaniment for the epic story of nature and family.

Tilmann von Stockhausen, director of Lübeck’s museums, expressed his pleasure at the new cooperative venture with the Nordic Film Days, “in the final quarter of the centennial year, the Retrospective will expand the capacity for a sensual venture into Thomas Mann’s inner world. The snow dreams of Nordic cinema will be a welcome enrichment of our year-long programme to celebrate 100 years of Thomas Mann’s monumental novel”.

Additional Retrospective films titles will be announced in the autumn of 2024 along with the entire programme for the 66th Nordic Film Days Lübeck.

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