

ELEMENTS OF (F) BALANCE



Ein Film von Othmar Schmiderer

Konzept: Stephan Settele, Othmar Schmiderer Kamera: Siri Klug, Shaheen Dill-Riaz Montage/Drohne: Arthur Summereder Ton/Sounddesign: Andreas Hamza Musik: Christian Fennesz
Postproduktion: av-design, GrandPost Presse/Marketing: Ines Kratzmueller Produktionsleitung: Hanne Lassel Produzent: Othmar Schmiderer www.elementsofbalance.at

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ELEMENTS OF(F) BALANCE

A 2025 Cinemascope 98 min

Logline

A journey to ecosystems hardly ever seen before, in the midst of a world based on exploitation. The focus is not on dystopian visions of the future, but on a new awareness and the new, concrete opportunities that open up for humanity when interrelated ways of living and forgotten alliances form the basis of our dealings with nature.

Synopsis

Ecological interdependence, co-creation, resilience and collaboration in nature – these are the topics dealt with in this documentary film, viewed against the backdrop of our increasingly threatened environment, which is facing immense ecological challenges.

Beyond the poles of nostalgia and techno-futurism, the episodes of the film provide an insight into natural processes and systems.

Dead forest in Central Europe is becoming living forest again. Floating beds in Bangladesh are taking on climate change. In the dunes of China's desert regions, thousands of people are working on the largest renaturalisation project in the world. In the Danube Delta between Romania and Ukraine, old dams from the Soviet era are being dismantled so that a European wetland can once again become a biodiverse natural landscape.

Today, the fascinating world of fungi and mycelia has already become a blueprint for futuristic, cutting-edge projects in architecture and sustainable fashion.

Cinematic explorations of ecological interdependencies and interactions between human and non-human actors culminate in stories about the fascinating survival strategies of jellyfish, which are among the oldest creatures on earth.

The age-old knowledge of agriculture called permaculture is also being revived, for instance at the Krameterhof farm in the Salzburg mountains, where it is being employed to create a living biotope.

What is being researched in the agricultural laboratories at Wageningen University in the Netherlands is no different: there, cyclically orientated and ecologically based processes are being developed with the help of artificial intelligence – not only to defy climate change, but also to preserve and protect the urgently needed biodiversity.

All these examples have one thing in common: the fact that partial, individual interests never form the focus of attention. It is the unconditional cooperation that makes ecosystems strong and resilient.

Nature as a role model and a potential game changer for future-oriented, innovative adaptation strategies? A film about possible approaches to meeting current ecological challenges.

Director's Statement

In my new film, *ELEMENTS OF(F) BALANCE*, I view nature as an active protagonist, as a mysterious and complex, interconnected system in which resilience, co-creation, and collaboration form the basis for survival and diversity, as they have always done. At a time of massive ecological challenges, I am interested in how we can learn from these natural strategies. The film invites us to view nature as a potential game changer, opening up perspectives on how we as humanity can shape an uncertain future, working together with nature rather than against it. Not in nostalgic retrospection, not in blind techno-futurism, but with an attitude of attentiveness and cooperation.

The different episodes in the film take us to various places on Earth. To places at breaking point and places of hope, in equal measure: to dead forests that are in the process of regenerating, to the floating gardens of Bangladesh, to renaturation projects in China and the Danube Delta, to visionary workshops creating materials from mushrooms, and to regions where permaculture is producing astonishing successes. A look at Dutch agricultural laboratories which employ AI shows that the future is created where cycles are enclosed and biodiversity is preserved.

To make these transformation processes visible, I use a cinematic language that combines observation with poetry. The Athena myth serves as a guideline: something is out of balance and the broken bond must be reestablished. The camera and sound linger, listen and switch between wide angles and close-ups, between structuralist rigour and organic sensuality. Sound, image, and editing endow the whole with a resonance space, in which science, experience, and nature are woven together into a shared narrative.

At the heart of it all is a simple but radical insight: it is not individual interests that make systems strong and resilient, but rather co-creative, collaborative cooperation. With this in mind, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the protagonists in my documentary film, as well as to my creative film team Stephan Settele (co-author & research), Arthur Summereder (drone & editing), Siri Klug (camera), Andreas Hamza (sound & sound design), Christian Fennesz (music), Hanne Lassl and Susanna Harrer (production management & film management), as well as everyone else involved, for their substantial input and constructive collaboration.

ELEMENTS OF(F) BALANCE. Review of the film (*Sebastian Höglinger*)

"God is a jellyfish," someone once said, referring to the evolutionary finesse of these undoubtedly majestic underwater creatures. If we concur with this bold proposition, then spiritual life on earth must be in good shape. Due to human and, consequently, climatic influences on the marine ecosystem, the jellyfish population has, to say the least, multiplied in recent decades. With 300 specimens (instead of an average of 0.2) per cubic meter of water, their Black Sea numbers reached unimaginable and epidemic proportions a few years ago. The fishermen's nets could no longer cope with the huge amounts of jellyfish and they displaced all other forms of life underwater. Leaving aside the image of brilliantly shimmering divinity, one thing is clear: something is out of balance.

Othmar Schmiderer and his team investigate the ecological fault lines along which, as indicated in the film's title, the balance of the elements has been disrupted. Or to be more precise, they focus on strategies that seek to reconstitute life on earth in a new (or time-honoured) way. From the conversations we hear, and the images we see through Siri Klug's camera lens, we realise that, like Athena, who - according to legend - severed the thread that once held the world together and then had to tie it back together again, it is becoming urgently necessary for us to reconnect things. Because, this time, it is the human species which is at stake. If we continue to live as we have done up until now, as a scientist in the film claims, we will suffer the same fate as the dinosaurs - and cease to exist.

By prefacing the film with the myth of Athena, Schmiderer and his co-author Stephan Settele at once raise its content to another, cinematic-poetic formal level. Consequently, the camera first plunges us into a foggy landscape which, together with Christian Fennesz's finely constructed soundscapes, blurs into an organic filmic body. When the haze clears, we find ourselves at the Krameterhof in Salzburg, a place where the life of the soil is still intact: 1 billion organisms populate just a handful of earth. Everything that creeps and flies, flora and fauna, all are here. And last but not least, fungi, the world of fungi, which has become an increasingly important focus of scientific research in recent years. While, at first glance, life at the Krameterhof seems very back-to-nature, in other places research into reversing destabilisation is very state-of-the-art. So we follow experts from a wide range of disciplines as they harness new building materials (primarily fungus-based), use jellyfish mucus for cosmetics, fertilisers and alternative foods, or employ artificial intelligence to optimise holistic agricultural land use.

As we observe the constant processes of transformation, the camera shifts between close-ups and wide shots: it pans across gigantic fields that blur into structuralist grids when viewed from a drone, or surveys surreal solar power plants

that could have derived from Tolkien's fantasy worlds, yet it always remains close to the people, a curious observer and patient listener. Although the dramatic thread eventually spans the entire globe, ELEMENTS OF(F) BALANCE allows its protagonists the time they need to present their points of view, pausing, listening, following trails, and linking perspectives.

It is thanks to Arthur Summereder's precise editing that the different strands eventually take shape in an increasingly clear conclusion: whether in the Romanian Danube Delta, the barren desert expanses of China, the Lungau region of Salzburg or the floating jungle of cuttings in Bangladesh, humans must learn to live and work with nature again, in order to bring about real change. It has always been humans who have interfered, sometimes violently, in the ecosystems and these are now in urgent need of repair. It is not the soil that is bad, but the way it is managed, to paraphrase Sepp Holzer's vivid credo. As a farmer and the manager of the Krameterhof, he is now internationally active in the field of change management. His commitment shows that not everything has to stay the way it has always been.

Despite the increasingly apocalyptic present-day world, these and similar episodes collected in the film give cause for optimism. To date, humans have always found a way out when a supposedly final dead end seemed to have been reached. One thing is certain: nature will find a way - with or without us. The film provides a painful example of this in the Danube Delta, where nature is recovering because there is no time for hunting and fishing, due to the war in Ukraine. When civilisation is preoccupied with itself, the environment breathes a sigh of relief. Where this will lead us and how we will respond is arguably the most pressing question of our time. Despite her optimism, Athena is noticeably concerned: something is out of balance.

VIENNALE 2025 catalogue text

At once urgent and meditative, ELEMENTS OF(F) BALANCE offers a survey of the most pressing challenges faced by our planet's precious and diverse ecosystems alongside the inventive solutions proposed to address them. From the production of biodegradable construction materials made using fungi, the cultivation of plants on floating beds in the lowlands of Bangladesh and the sowing of straw to resist desertification in China, we witness the infinite gifts that the natural world has already bestowed upon us to sustain life. Free of titles that identify nations or names, the film features a cast of scientists and farmers in varied landscapes speaking different languages, proposing a vision of collaboration and innovation that foregrounds humanity instead of borders. In our current climate catastrophe, director Othmar Schmiderer offers a necessary path out of despair, oriented

instead towards new ways of living that encourage environmental sustainability over economic growth and mutualism over exploitation. With exquisite, breathtaking scenes across land and water, Schmiderer's documentary not only provides a glimmer of hope for the future but also serves as a compelling reminder of why this world is worth saving.

(Winnie Wang, Viennale 2025)

CREDITS Elements of(f) Balance

Director Othmar Schmiderer

Concept Stephan Settele & Othmar Schmiderer

Montage Arthur Summereder

Camera Siri Klug (DOP),
Shaheen Dill-Riaz, Othmar Schmiderer, Joerg Burger

Camera/drone Arthur Summereder

Set sound Andreas Hamza, Nora Czammler, Masrur Rahman Masud, Johannes Schmelzer Ziringer, Arthur Summereder

Research, artistic consultant Stephan Settele

Colour design Ulrich Grimm

Sound design Andreas Hamza

Sound mixing GRANDPOST - Alexander Koller

Post-production AVDESIGN

Title graphics Arthur Summereder

Intro text Lisa Spalt

Music Christian Fennesz

Translations Peter Waugh, Isabel Wolte, Laura Balomiri, Eva Gressel

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Film management Susanna Harrer

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Marketing & Press management Ines Kratzmueller

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China

Location manager An Qingyun

Film consultant/translations Isabel Wollte

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Location manager Tiberiu Tioc

Translations Laura Balomiri

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Slovenia

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Austria, Lungau

Krameterhof Holzer Permaculture Solutions:

Josef Andreas Holzer, Sepp Holzer, Regina Folzwinkler, Jeanne Martin, Thomas Fumig, Laura Fröhlich, Balint Toth

The Netherlands, Wageningen

Wageningen University & Research:

Wijnand Sukkel, Ing. Erik Pekkeriet, Magdalena Smigaj and students, NL

Italy, Naples

Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn:

Prof. Ferdinando Boero

Austria, Vienna

Schönbrunn Zoo:

Curator Anton Weissenbacher, Roland Halbauer, Leena Weghaupt

Slovenia, Piran

Marine Biology Station Piran:

Tristan Bartole, Tihomir Makovec, Milijan Siško, Director Dr. Borut Mavrič,
Dr. Tinkara Tinta, Dr. Martin Vodopivec

Germany, Berlin

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Austria, Innsbruck

Mushroom Research Center Austria, Tyroler Glückspilze:

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Robert Exenberger, Gabriel Bene

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Forestry Office of Thuringia Sonneberg & Neuhaus:

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China

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Dunhuang:

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Babusha Forest Farm:
Shi Yinshan

Dunhuang Shouhang Energy Saving New Energy Co., Ltd:Liu Fuguo

Bangladesh, Boldia Union, Gagan Gram

Rafiqul Islam, Hafizul Islam, Mohammad Ripon, Monzurul Islam, Shahariaj Ahmed
Abdus Satter,
Mohammad Billal Hossain, Mohammad Farid, Mohammad Shahdat Hossain,
Moshammat Zakia,
Mohammad Shahariaj Ahmed, Moshammat Israt Jahan

Romania, Danube Delta

Caraorman:
Dumitrescu Angelo Florian

Letea:
Costel Canareica , Spiridon Canareica, Monica Canareica, Viorela Canareica

Rewilding Danube Delta/Ukraine:
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Sulina:
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Ecke Bonk, Joerg Burger, Christine Dollhofer, Clemens Gadenstätter, Bodo Hell,
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Archive material

Animation mycel:

SQIM/Mogu S.r.l.

Underwater photography:

Marine Biology Station Piran

Dr. Borut Mavrič, Tihomir Makovec

Rewilding Danube Delta/Ukraine:

Kurakin Oleksandr, Maksim Yakovlev

Distribution Austria: Filmladen Filmverleih

Worldwide distribution: filmdelights

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BIOGRAPHY

Othmar Schmiderer was born in Lofer, Salzburg. He has lived in Vienna since 1973. After working as a teacher, restaurateur (Amerlingbeisl), and cultural manager, he became a production and directing assistant at the Theaterkooperative zur Schaubude in 1980

Since 1983, he has worked in film in various roles on numerous documentaries and feature films, including collaborations with Michael Pilz, Valie Export, and many others. Since 1987, he has been an independent filmmaker in Vienna and Grafenwörth, founding the production company o.schmiderer filmproduktion in 2009

FILMOGRAPHY (selection)

2025 ELEMENTS OF(F) BALANCE new title World premiere at the Viennale 2025 and international premiere at IFFR Rotterdam 2026

2022-2025 WIR : ERDE (working title) in production with funding from ÖFI, FFW, FISA, ORF, Land NOE, and Land Salzburg

Director/Producer: Othmar Schmiderer Concept: Stephan Settele/Othmar Schmiderer Camera: Siri Klug Editing: Arthur Summereder, Sound/Sound Design: Andreas Hamza, Music: Christian Fennesz, Production Manager: Hanne Lassl

2021 Making-of ART (working title)

Documentary film in project development in collaboration with Clemens Gadenstätter

Transdisciplinary thinking and acting as a way of life and artistic practice. The film will present research on the practice and theory of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work in art production and reception. It aims to make the traces of creation as tangible as the foundations on which this creation is based: foundations of a personal as well as a social nature.

2018 THE DAYS LIKE THE YEAR

Documentary film 90 min. Director, camera, production: Othmar Schmiderer

Concept: Angela Summereder / Othmar Schmiderer Editing: Arthur Summereder Produced with funding from: BKA, Land NOE Completion: Sept. 2018

Festivals: World premiere at DOC LEIPZIG Int. Competition, Austrian premiere Diagonale Graz 2019, Diagonale Award for Best Editing, in theaters from March 2019, Heimatfilmfestival Freistadt, Fünf Seen Festival Starnberg, Filmfestival della Lessina Italy, IEFF Eco Film Festival Jakarta, 2020

BIFED Bozcaada International Festival of Ecological Documentary, Beijing Goethe-Institut Film Festival

2014-2016 CULTURAL & SCIENCE HIGHLIGHTS in Lower Austria

180-minute documentaries commissioned by the state

Director, camera, production: Othmar Schmiderer Editing: Arthur Summereder

July 2015 ORF Kulturmatinee Im weiten Land - Kulturakzente in NOE 25 min., Feb.
2016 ORF Ö-Bild

Wissen schaffen - Forschen in NOE 25 min.

2015 AUS DEM NICHTS a film by Angela Summereder

Docu-fiction 90 min. Production/producer: Othmar Schmiderer

Production funding: ÖFI, ORF, FISA, Province of Lower Austria, Province of Upper Austria,

2013 Im Augenblick (At the Moment) - History and the Open

Experimental documentary film B&W & color 33 min. Directors: Othmar Schmiderer & Angela Summereder Camera: Othmar Schmiderer Editing: Othmar Schmiderer & Angela Summereder Musik : Clemens Gadenstätter Cast: Bodo Hell Production: o.schmiderer filmproduktion Production funding: BKA, State of Lower Austria

Festivals: Diagonale, Crossing Europe, Duisburg Film Festival ...

2012: Video spot with Elina Garanca - Aria: "Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix" from Samson and Dalila B/W 6 min 20 HD

Director, editing: Othmar Schmiderer Camera: Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein Sculpture: Beatrix Sunkovsky, Alfons Egger, Costumes: Peter Kudensa

Production: o.schmiderer filmproduktion on behalf of Deutsche Grammophon Ges.m.b.H.

2009 - 2011 STOFF DER HEIMAT

Documentary film HD CAM/ DCP 94 min Dolby SR 5.1

Director and camera: Othmar Schmiderer Idea: Elsbeth Wallnöfer

Screenplay: Othmar Schmiderer/Elsbeth Wallnöfer Sound: Georg Misch, Editing: Daniel Pöhacker,

Sound design: Nils Kirchhoff, Music: Wolfgang Mitterer ,

Production: Othmar Schmiderer Filmproduktion

ORF Film-Fernsehabskommen, bmukk, Länder S, NÖ, St, W, South Tyrol

Festivals: Viennale 2011, IDFA Int. Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam 2011, Diagonale Graz 2012,

Trento Film Festival Prize MUSE USI E COSTUMI DELLA CENTE TRENTINA AWARD

FünfSeenFestival, Bavaria

2009: Repeated Times Christoph Feichtinger

Documentary - Artist Portrait HDV 55 min Production, direction, camera, editing: Othmar Schmiderer

2007-2009: Voodoo Spirits - The Power of Healing

Documentary film HDV Faz35mm Dolby Stereo 75 min

Director: Henning Christoph, Co-director/Camera: Othmar Schmiderer, Editing: Daniel Pöhacker

Sound: Georg Misch Camera assistant/Lighting: Gerhard Leitner

Co-production: Shotgun Pictures/Rommel Film Germany

Completed in 2010

2006-2008: Back to Africa

Cinema - documentary film 90 min. HD Cam/FAZ 35mm

Written and directed by: Othmar Schmiderer Camera: Hermann Dunzendorfer, Moritz Gisemann Sound: Frank Haitbrink, Bruno Pisek Editing: Sarah Levin, Peter Przygoda Assistant director: Helen Zellweger PL: Thomas Osanger, Kathleen Reinecke

Co-production A/BRD: Lanbein & Skalnik/Peter Rommel Productions

ORF Film-Fernsehabskommen WDR/ARTE, Austrian Film Institute, Eurimages, Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, German Film Fund

Festivals: Diagonale Graz Opening Film, Filmfest München, Crossing Europe Linz, Int.Docfilmfestival Amsterdam, Doc-Festival Thessaloniki, IFF Granada, FF Teluride USA, etc.

2005-2006 ANDRÉ HELLER - OUT OF COMPETITION

Documentary TV portrait 60 min., HDCAM 16:9, WDR/ARTE and ORF, Director and Camera:

Othmar Schmiderer, second camera, Jörg Burger, sound: Georg Misch, Peter Zach, Ulrich Goebel, editing: Karina Ressler

Production: Langbein & Skalnik, Vienna

2005: JESSYE NORMAN "I live alone in my heaven, in my love, in my song"

90 min., Super 16mm ORF, WFF, RTF, BR, ARD, ARTE Screenplay & direction: André Heller and Othmar Schmiderer

Cinematography: Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, Wolfgang Lehner; Editing: Britta Nahler

Sound: Ulrich Goebel; Set design: Georg Resetschnig

Costumes: Annette Beaufays; Production: Dor-Film Danny Kraus & Kurt Stocker

2003 LONG DISTANCE CALLS/CLOSE-UP Experimental film, 8 min., with Friederike Mayröcker & Bodo Hell

2002 Video installation for the opera LA VOIX HUMAINE with Jessey Norman, directed by AndreHeller, Oct. 2002 Paris Chatlet

2002: RIA NACKT, opera, staging & video projection in collaboration with Bodo Hell: text,, Renald Deppe: music and Mario Bräuer stage/set design Donaufestival Krems 2002

2001-2002: Blind Spot - Hitlers Secretary Documentary film 90 min DV/FAZ 35mm

Dolby Stereo Co-directed with Andre Heller, camera & sound, production: DOR-FILM

Festivals: 52nd Berlin International Film Festival 2002 Panorama Audience Award, Visions du Réel Nyon, Mention Speciale , Documentary Festivals Marseille, Toronto, Telluride, Chicago (golden plaque for best documentary) , New York, etc. Nomination European Film - Documentary Awards 2002 - PrixArte, Cinema distribution: Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary, Argentina, USA, Canada, etc.

1997/98: AN ECHO FROM EUROPE-VIENNA ART ORCHESTRA ON TOUR

Documentary film: Digital video/FAZ 35mm Dolby Stereo, 102 min., screenplay, director, camera; editing: Daniel Pöhacker, Production: DOR-FILM

Festivals: 1999 Diagonale Graz, Hofer Filmtage Film distribution: Filmladen Vienna, Germany: Salzgeber Berlin

TV: ORF

1995-1997: AM STEIN Documentary film, Super 16/Blow up 35mm, 1:1.66 Dolby Stereo digital 110min.

Screenplay, director, camera Co-author: Bodo Hell, Mario Bräuer Music: Uli Scherer , Editing: Daniel Pöhacker, Production: Prisma Film

Festivals: Vision du reel Cinema documentaire Nyon Competition PRIX JEUNE PUBLIC, Filmfestival Internazionale Montagna Trento, Hofer Filmtage, Diagonale Graz TV: ORF; SWF

1994 - 1996: KLANGSÄULE (Sound Column) - Dance video Beta SP 55 min., Production, Camera, Editing;Choreography: Sebastian Prantl, Music: Friedrich Cerha, Sculpture: Karl Prantl, Festival: Diagonale Salzburg 1995

KRAFTFELD I-IV (Force Field I-IV), 75 min.; ERINNERUNGSRÄUME (Spaces of Memory), 90 min.; dance videos, production, camera, editing,

choreography: Sebastian Prantl, music: Cecilia Li

1993: COLLISION - dance video, BetaSp Stereo 25 min. Concept, direction, camera, set design: Mario

Bräuer Dance & choreography: Editta Braun, Jean Yves Ginoux

Festivals: dance screen Alte Oper Frankfurt, 1994 International Film & TV Festival New York - 3rd Prize Non Broadcast Performing Arts

1992: MOBILE STABLE - Essayistic documentary film Beta-SP, 40 min.

Script, co-director with Harald Friedl, camera, editing, text: Bodo Hell, music: Uli Scherer

Festivals: Documentary Film Festival Duisburg, Leipzig, Architecture Film Festival Graz, 1993 Diagonale Salzburg, 94 Wexner Center Ohio, Hamburg Architecture Week, BildRaum, Film und Architektur, Vienna Architecture Center

TV: WDR 94 **1988: JOSEF HAUSER-KLANG UND RAUM** 16mm, b&w, 55 min. Documentary film

Screenplay, co-directed with Heinz Ebner, camera, editing - Set design: Mario Bräuer

Festivals: Austrian Film Days Wels, Documentary Film Festival Nyon CH, IDFA Amsterdam, Paris (Cinema du Reel), Viennale, Leipzig, Figueira da Foz, Hamburg, Bombay

TV: ORF Kunststücke 1988, SWF 1989