

Hidden in the rock: The mountain, the salt and the art (Verborgen im Fels. Der Berg, das Salz und die Kunst)

Between 1943 and 1945, significant portions of the art looted by Hitler from all over Europe were stored in the Altaussee salt mine in the Liezen district of Styria. A series of dramatic events took place in April 1945, when the then Gauleiter decided to destroy the cultural artefacts. After frantic efforts and with an elaborate plan, the salt works management, the mining commissioners and the miners were ultimately able to prevent the destruction of the artistic treasures and the mine.

The German comic artist Simon Schwartz, a master of bringing contemporary history to life, was commissioned to draw the history of the Altaussee salt mine from 5000 BC to the present day.

The exhibition "Hidden in the rock: The mountain, the salt & the art" was realised through cooperation between Salzwelten GmbH and the European Capital of Culture Bad Ischl Salzkammergut 2024 as part of the Power and Tradition programme and can be viewed as a permanent exhibition in the visitor centre on the first floor of the Steinberghaus Salzwelten Altaussee from 23 March, 2024. Admission is free.

Location: Steinberghaus Salzwelten Altaussee,
Visitor Centre, first floor, Lichtersberg 25, 8992 Altaussee

Opening: Friday 22 March, 2024, 5 pm

Duration of the exhibition: 23 March–3 November, 2024
After the winter break, the exhibition will reopen from March 2025

Opening hours: 23 March–28 June, 2024 and 9 September–3 November, 2024, Mon–Sun 9 am–4 pm
29 June–8 September, 2024, Mon–Sun 9 am–5 pm

Free admission

Information: www.salzkammergut-2024.at, www.simon-schwartz.com, www.salzwelten.at

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[Photo material](#)

Altaussee, 27 February, 2024

The Altaussee salt mine – now Steinberghaus Salzwelten Altaussee – looks back on a long and above all eventful history: there is evidence that the "white gold" has been mined here since 1147. For centuries, salt was an important source of livelihood for the people in the region, bringing prosperity and political power, and Altaussee is the largest active salt mine in Austria to this day. With the Salzwelten and the associated mines, the region is also a tourist attraction today. "Hidden in the rock: The mountain, the salt & the art" tells the story of salt mining in the Salzkammergut from the numerous changes of rulers, the miners' lack of rights and their struggle for better living conditions, to the "Anschluss", to Hitler's Germany and the use of the mine tunnels as storage facilities for the looted art collected by the Nazis from all over Europe. Today, the story of how courageous miners saved the artistic treasures from destruction by the Nazis in the last days of the war in 1945

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has almost been forgotten.

Parallel to the exhibition "Hidden in the rock: The mountain, the salt and the art" at Steinberghaus Salzwelten Altaussee, Simon Schwartz's graphic novel is being published under the same title name as a high-quality hardback book edition (Berlin: Avant Verlag, 2024. ISBN: 978-3-96445-111-8) at a price of €18.50.

Simon Schwartz, born in Erfurt in 1982 and raised in Berlin-Kreuzberg, is one of Germany's best-known comic artists. He moved to the Hanseatic city in 2004 to study at the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences. His diploma thesis *drüben!* was published by Avant Verlag in 2009 and won the ICOM Independent Comic Award in the Outstanding Scenario category. In 2010, *drüben!* was nominated for the German Youth Literature Prize. His second graphic novel *Packeis* (Avant Verlag, 2012) was honoured with the Max-und-Moritz Prize for Best German Comic. This was followed by works such as *IKON* (Avant Verlag, 2018) and *Das Parlament* (Avant Verlag, 2019). Schwartz regularly draws for *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, *Der Freitag*, *GEOLINO* and *Die Zeit*, among others. A series for *Der Freitag* led to the publication of *Vita Obscura* in 2014, the first anthology of Schwartz's comic strips of the same name from the weekly newspaper *Der Freitag*. Since 2019, the comic strip has appeared in the *F.A.Z.* magazine, where it replaced the "Karlikaturen" drawn by Karl Lagerfeld until his death. Schwarz is also responsible for the design of the 7 x 40 meter frieze at the Andreasstraße memorial and educational site in Erfurt, where the former remand prison of the Ministry of State Security was located, which commemorates the peaceful revolution in East Germany in 1989. In 2017 and 2019, the German Bundestag honoured Simon Schwartz with solo exhibitions from the comic series *Das Parlament* in the lobby of the Reichstag building. Simon Schwartz lives and works in Hamburg.

Contributors

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