

PRESS INFORMATION

**fadin'to whiteout
light installation**

This winter, the Swarovski Kristallwelten cabinet of curiosities will have a very special annex. In a white cube in front of the Giant a polar phenomenon, known as whiteout, will be staged – equal reflections of snow and clouds cause contours to dissolve. The idea for this installation came from one of the winning projects in the student competition “Arctic”, which Swarovski held this spring at the TU Innsbruck, Institute for Experimental Studies in Architecture. The project fadin'to whiteout was inspired by a lecture given by the Icelandic artist Ólafur Elíasson during the competition, as part of his jury membership. From November 25th, 2005, visitors of the Kristallwelten can take a trip into the multi-layered world of perception of the whiteout phenomenon.

What is the world?

Three friends were curious to find out how big the world is and what shape it has. In the end they were so curious that they decided to go out on an expedition. They travelled for three days and three nights and then they came to a big igloo. “Let’s go in”, one of them said. And so they did, but they saw straight away that this house had no end. So they walked along the wall so that they would not get lost. But where was the way out? They kept walking – for days, for months, for years. Finally, they broke down out of sheer exhaustion and crawled ahead. Two of the friends gave up, sat down and died. But the third one managed to find the way out. His kayak was just where he had left it. But by the time he got back to his people he had grown ancient. He said to the people: “The world is just a giant igloo.” And then he died.

Folktale from Greenland¹

¹ From Millman, Lawrence: Kajak drekkhlaðinn af draugum. Ínúítasögur. Reykjavík 1999, own translation.

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The story of three Inuit men measuring the world is just one of many folktales and myths of the Arctic dealing with the whiteout phenomenon. The scientific explanation is an effect of the light after strong snowfall (or during strong snowfall), when the surroundings are cut off from the sun's rays by cloud cover. The snow reflects the same amount of light as the sky beneath the clouds, so that neither the horizon nor the contours of the landscape are recognisable. There are no shadows, and only very dark objects are visible.

The effects on humans can be briefly summarised as loss of orientation, dizziness and visual impairments.

Ursula Ender and Albert Elmenreich deal with the aesthetic qualities of this natural phenomenon in their installation fadin'to whiteout, which will be opened on 25.11.05 in front of the Swarovski Kristallwelten.

The installation makes precise use of white light to dissolve all boundaries of perception.

The imagined coldness of ice, closely related to crystals through its structure and etymology (Greek crystallos), is alleviated by its inherent sound spectrum: white noise, mixed from endless identical sound signals, diffusely interspersed with information, integrates a further sensual level.

In the face of the dominating colour white, all that is experienced within the cube can only be self-reflection. There lies the key to the infinitely sized model of nature, to the snow and ice deserts of the poles. Synonymous for emptiness, the absence of everything, they are those places where the self becomes a giant, despite its small dimensions.

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