

Two people return to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa. Giulia overcame a personal crisis here, Zakaria fled here from the civil war in his homeland of Somalia.

Schreiner tells about them, about innermost thoughts, existential questions and fears, about transiency: A search for meaning that remains fragmentary, moving between memory and now. The past presses into the monologues and conversations in the present of the cinematic image. It has written itself visibly into the skin, faces, and bodies that Schreiner explores in close ups, which become practically perceptible, yet nonetheless remain highly artificial.

The strict, sensual beauty of these images, the play with abstraction of brilliant black-and-white, of light and shadow, the long, calm takes, the concentration on details all create the space for an intuitive, concentrated awareness, a space of encounter.

The site of this encounter is concrete, but for the characters, the sparse, brittle landscape of Lampedusa turns into a stage of sorts, and a projection; an abstract space. Just as this island exists as a mere idea for most of us, as a place where political action becomes manifest, and also a crisis—the relationship of old Europe and young Africa, the dynamics of resistance and mesmerized attraction, of inside and outside.

Schreiner drafts Lampedusa as a universal, internal narrative, as intense space of experience and association, oscillating between documentary and fictional elements.

Freed of the necessity to explain, the film itself becomes a search and interrogation—of the characters, cinematic form, and our own present realities.

(Barbara Pichler)