KINONIK

# THE WHITE HELL OF PITZ PALU (1929)

**Directed by G.W. Pabst**

**WEDNESDAY April 1st 7PM**

**SATURDAY April 4th 2PM / 7PM**



Young Leni Riefenstahl climbs a 12,000-foot peak in the Bernina Alps wearing a short-sleeved shirt and knee-length skirt, ice forming on her face in sub-zero winds. She developed severe frostbite during the five-month shoot; a bladder infection would plague her for the rest of her life. This is where she learned to make films. Six years later she directed Triumph of the Will.

The Bergfilm — the German mountain film genre — taught her everything: how to frame pure bodies against sublime landscape, how to choreograph masses of moving figures (watch the torchlit rescue sequence), how to make physical struggle look like spiritual transcendence. Arnold Fanck pioneered the genre; G.W. Pabst co-directed to keep the melodrama grounded. What they built together was a Völkisch framework for understanding nature: German vitality confronting elemental forces, the body as raw material for ideological transformation.

This is the origin point. Before wellness influencers told you to optimize your mitochondria, before raw milk evangelists promised purity through unprocessed living, before anyone talked about returning to ancestral health, there was the Bergfilm. Mountains as proving grounds. The body meeting nature as a test of worthiness. Physical purity standing in for spiritual and racial purity. The genre flowered in Weimar Germany alongside the rise of Nazism, then died when the Reich no longer needed mountain metaphors. But the logic survived: nature as purifier, the city as contamination, authentic living as bodily discipline, human vitality as something to be managed and optimized and kept pure.