

Unsettling *Heimat* and the Touristic Ideal: Tropes of the Uncanny in Lois Hechenblaikner's *Anti-Heimat* Photography

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Visitors to the Tyrol tourism website are welcomed by the following paragraph, which conjures up an ideal vision of holidays in the Alps, promising an authentic and welcoming experience in the comforting fashion of Austrian hospitality: 'Wer nach Tirol kommt, erlebt ein Land, dessen majestätische Bergwelt einen sofort verzaubert. Weil sie die Seele berührt, unzählige Aktivitäten ermöglicht und weil sie sich in den Menschen spiegelt, die hier leben und die Erholungssuchenden willkommen heißen' [Anyone coming to Tyrol will experience a country whose majestic mountains enchant them immediately. Because they touch the soul, offer the opportunity for countless activities, and because they are mirrored in the people who live here and welcome those in search of relaxation].¹ This vision of an ideal Austria relies on two main factors which have been central to formulations of Austrian identity and its tourist image since at least the mid-twentieth century: a sublime Alpine landscape and an image of rural authenticity and comfort, encapsulated within the notion of *Heimat* as a safe space in 'a society of shifting values and uncertain truths'.²

A significant component of *Heimat* is its position as a 'spatial identity', which is wholly subjective on a personal level but in the Austrian cultural and social context bears the hallmarks of a traditional collective identity, and an idealized vision of the countryside for touristic purposes.³ The Tyrol tourism website exemplifies how the Austrian *Heimat* ideal has become a highly marketable venture: pictured as a place in which modern amenities meet strong local traditions, Tyrol is presented as an ideal escape destination with a homely feeling. The site even offers a range of sublime Tyrolean landscape photographs

¹ Tirol Werbung GmbH, 'Tirol — Urlaub im Herz der Alpen', *Tirol.at* <<https://www.tirol.at/>> [accessed 4 December 2020].

² See Gundolf Graml, *Revisiting Austria: Tourism, Space, and National Identity, 1945 to the Present* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2020), also Celia Applegate, 'The Question of Heimat in the Weimar Republic', *New Formations*, 17 (1992), 64–76 (p. 64).

³ Peter Weichhart, 'Heimat, raumbezogene Identität und Descartes' Irrtum', in *Heimat: Ein vielfältiges Konstrukt*, ed. by Martina Hülz, Olaf Kühne and Florian Weber (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2019), pp. 53–66.

as desktop screensavers. Should visitors have ‘keine Zeit für Urlaub in Tirol’ [no time for holidays in Tyrol] they can download it onto their electronic device for free instead.⁴ Beyond the gimmicky marketing gag, these images give a clear sense of how (predominantly German) holidaymakers and Alpine sports enthusiasts are encouraged to visualize the region: with wild nature, hearty meals accompanied by beer, individual figures engaged in sporting activities in the mountains and traditional architecture embedded in the landscape. Tyrol thus represents the *Heimat* dream, both enticingly remote and ‘authentic’ and available to book (or at least to download) with just a mouse click. If a prospective visitor is uncertain what kind of holidaymaker they are, the website has another service at hand: with the thinly veiled marketing survey ‘Tirol für dich — welcher Urlaubstyp bist du?’ [Tyrol for you — what type of holidaymaker are you?] the website promises a holiday tailored to an individual’s preferences, suggesting that ‘Urlaub in Tirol’ is a personalized experience, rather than a package holiday.⁵

Since at least the mid-1980s, however, the pre-formatted surface of a *Heimat* idyll has also become a privileged site of criticism in Austrian culture, in which *Heimat* is exposed as a mere shell of homeliness, constructed with the intent to abolish diversity and to market a tourism-friendly image of Alpine Austria as a quaint and happy place. The concept of the uncanny, particularly in reference to Sigmund Freud’s tracing of the etymological origins of its German equivalent, *unheimlich*, as ‘uncanny/eerie’ but also ‘unhomely’, constitutes a significant strategy of critique in this context.⁶ Building on Freudian explorations of the term as something familiar yet estranged, which has been repressed or was thought to have been dealt with but suddenly resurfaces, the uncanny is a central topic in the *Anti-Heimat* genre of Austrian film and literature, prominent in works such as Thomas Bernhard’s *Heldenplatz* [*Heroes Square*, 1988], Elfriede Jelinek’s *Rechnitz* (*Der Würgeengel*) [*Rechnitz (or The Exterminating Angel)*, 2009] and the films of Ruth Beckermann.⁷ Analysed in studies such as W. G. Sebald’s *Unheimliche Heimat* [Unhomely Homeland, 1991] and, more recently, Katya Krylova’s *The Long Shadow of the Past* (2017), the works of these authors unravel the idealized concept of *Heimat*, revealing it to be a treacherous surface, steeped in conservatism, anti-cosmopolitanism and the lingering presence of the National Socialist past.⁸

⁴ ‘Hintergrundbilder für das Smartphone oder den PC’, *Tirol.at* <<https://www.tirol.at/reiseservice/hintergrundbilder>> [accessed 4 December 2020].

⁵ ‘Tirol für dich — welcher Urlaubstyp bist du?’, *Tirol.at* <<https://www.tirol.at/reisefuehrer/tirol-fuer>> [accessed 4 December 2020].

⁶ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 351.

⁷ Thomas Bernhard, *Heldenplatz* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995 [1988]). Elfriede Jelinek, *Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns / Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel) / Über Tiere: Drei Theaterstücke* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2009), pp. 53–205.

⁸ Katya Krylova, *The Long Shadow of the Past: Contemporary Austrian Literature, Film*

Another significant aspect of the *Anti-Heimat* genre, as defined by Andrea Kunne, is its critique of an accelerating tourist industry, which builds on a similar surface image of *Heimat* for capitalist gains.⁹ Similar to the critique of an unresolved National Socialist past, an idyllic surface here masks ‘uncomfortable truths’ (for example, about social exploitation and the destruction of the environment) in order to save appearances. As the main priority is to entertain a growing number of tourists in search of relaxation and pleasure, the *Heimat* image turns into an eerie simulacrum at the expense of local landscape and social infrastructure.¹⁰ The fast-paced nature of tourism in a late capitalist system, in other words, preconditions a sense of the uncanny in the *Heimat* image.

In the work of writers such as Elfriede Jelinek and Felix Mitterer, *Heimat* is exposed as a farce of mass tourism and its harmful effects on traditional communities and the environment are revealed. The uncanny here introduces grotesque elements within familiar settings in order to disrupt and question a well-established *Heimat* ideal. In Mitterer’s *Die Piefke-Saga: Komödie einer vergeblichen Zuneigung* [The Piefke-Saga: Comedy of a Vain Affection, 1991] for example, a four-part satire which aired on Austrian and German television in the early 1990s, mass tourism in Tyrol is represented as a grotesque machinery, in which the perfect Alpine landscape is ultimately reduced to nothing more than a plastic village, populated by remote-controlled humanoids that resemble Tyrolean natives.¹¹ In *Die Piefke-Saga*, as well as Jelinek’s *Oh Wildnis, oh Schutz vor ihr* [Oh Wilderness, oh Protection from it, 1985] and *Die Kinder der Toten* [The Children of the Dead, 1995], strategies for introducing the uncanny to disrupt the *Heimat* ideal are manifold.¹² Yet, the *Heimat* image which is disturbed in these works remains notably consistent and builds on a strong, simplified visuality. Deeply embedded in a visual tradition that was manifested in the popular genres of *Heimatphotographie* and *Heimatfilm* of the 1930s to the 1950s and that is continued in contemporary advertising, the visual identity of the Austrian *Heimat* is still decidedly rural, referring to Alpine landscapes and a life close to nature, as well as to the celebration of folk traditions.¹³ Taking the

and Culture (Rochester: Camden House Press, 2017); W. G. Sebald, *Unheimliche Heimat: Essays zur österreichischen Literatur* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2012 [1991]).

⁹ Andrea Kunne, ‘“From Natural to Unnatural”: The Image of Austria as “Heile Welt” and its Consequences’, *European Studies*, 18 (2002), 43–63 (p. 58).

¹⁰ Steffen Arora, ‘Die Gletscherehe — Tourismus in seiner zerstörerischen Form’, *Der Standard*, 9 November 2019, <<https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000110843796/die-gletscherehe-tourismus-in-seiner-zerstoererischen-form>> [accessed 20 August 2021].

¹¹ Felix Mitterer, *Die Piefke-Saga: Komödie einer vergeblichen Zuneigung* (Innsbruck: Haymon, 1991).

¹² Elfriede Jelinek, *Oh Wildnis, Oh Schutz vor ihr: Prosa* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 1993 [1985]); Elfriede Jelinek, *Die Kinder der Toten* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 2009 [1995]).

¹³ See Elizabeth Cronin, *Heimatfotografie in Österreich: Eine politisierte Sicht von Bauern und Skifahrern* (Vienna: Photoinstitut Bonartes; Vienna: Albertina; and Salzburg: Fotohof edition, 2015).

stability of *Heimat*'s visual image as a point of departure, this article addresses a much less explored phenomenon. Focusing on the work of the Tyrolean photographer Lois Hechenblaikner (born in 1958), I argue that the uncanny represents a significant aspect of social critique in contemporary *Anti-Heimat* photographic practice, which builds on a subversion of the strong visuality of the *Heimat* ideal as it is promoted in mass tourism.

I

Photography and the uncanny have long been linked, reaching back to Roland Barthes's understanding of the photograph of a deceased loved one as an imprint of the past in the present.¹⁴ Forging a sense of uncertainty between reality and fiction, the past and the present, the recording process of photography recalls Freudian definitions of the uncanny as something familiar and old which resurfaces. More recently, Claire Raymond has extended this argument, asserting that, in its function of lifting something familiar into the extraordinary by virtue of being photographed, photography

defines the familiar at the same time it transmogrifies the familiar into that which is strange and set apart. This cleavage is an aspect of the uncanny: at the precise point of the photograph, the familiar diverges into the strange.¹⁵

Assessing aspects of the uncanny in the work of modern and contemporary photographers such as Eugène Atget (1857–1927), August Sander (1976–64) and Shelley Niro (born in 1954), Raymond highlights the photographers' use of the uncanny as a political practice ('the political uncanny'), which surfaces as 'subtle protest' within the aesthetic realm.¹⁶ Focusing on contemporary photography in the Alpine space, I adopt Raymond's model of analysis to assess Hechenblaikner's uses of the uncanny as a strategy of social critique. The uncanny is thereby positioned in a socio-political rather than a psychoanalytical context, following Nicholas Royle's wide-ranging definition of the term as

something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or [...] something strange and unfamiliar arising in a familiar context. It can consist of a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the hearth and home.¹⁷

In this light, Hechenblaikner's photographic series represents an interference in the normative image of the Alpine space, making the political uncanny a central aspect of his work.

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), pp. 109–10.

¹⁵ Claire Raymond, *The Photographic Uncanny: Photography, Homelessness, and Homesickness* (Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 1.

As the ‘Thomas Bernhard of the yodelling industry’, Hechenblaikner subverts established tropes of *Heimat* and documentary photography in long-term photographic projects, carefully constructing an uncanny *Heimat* that estranges familiar idylls and exposes them as doubles that gloss over — or repress — the destructive realities behind the mass marketing of the Alpine landscape.¹⁸ Born into a family who own a small hotel in the Alpbach valley in Tyrol, Hechenblaikner first worked as an international photojournalist before beginning to focus on the effects of mass tourism in his home province in the mid-1990s.¹⁹ According to Werner Bätzing’s outline of the different historical stages of tourism in Tyrol, Hechenblaikner’s shift from international reportage to concentrate on this specific region coincides with an effort to drive forward the development of mass tourism, resulting in a steep rise in demand, the expansion of existing facilities and a notable rise in prices.²⁰ Following the development of tourism in Tyrol from this point of acceleration onwards, Hechenblaikner has dissected different aspects of its fast-paced model in numerous photographic series, each of which focuses on visualizing mass tourism’s effects on the local environment. As well as featuring in international exhibitions, several of the series have also been published as photo books. Three of these, *Hinter den Bergen* [Behind the Mountains, 2015], *Volks Musik* [Folk Music, 2019] and *Ischgl* (2020), are the main focus of this essay.²¹ Exposing the ‘half familiar yet strange’ elements of touristic mass culture, the photographer, who calls his work a ‘fotographische Kulturanthropologie’ [photographic anthropology of culture], builds a typology of contemporary Tyrol, in which the uncanny unmasks the *Heimat* idyll as an *Anti-Heimat* in a destructive, profit-driven system.²²

¹⁸ Bernadette Bayrhammer, ‘Der Thomas Bernhard der Jodelindustrie’, *Die Presse* <<https://www.diepresse.com/3857040/der-thomas-bernhard-der-jodelindustrie>> [accessed 1 December 2020]; Heinz Bayer, ‘Der letzte Wildschütz’ von Tirol’, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 19 October 2009, < <https://www.hechenblaikner.at/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SN2865.pdf>> [accessed 15 September 2021].

¹⁹ Klaus Spielmann, ‘Fotograf im Blick: Lois Hechenblaikner. Jenseits der Ansichtskarte’, *Seelegrafieren. Fotoblog der Gruppe 43* <<https://www.seelegrafieren.com/fotograf-im-blick/fotograf-im-blick-lois-hechenblaikner/>> [accessed 15 November 2020].

²⁰ Werner Bätzing, ‘Orte guten Lebens: Visionen für einen Alpentourismus zwischen Wildnis und Freizeitpark’, in *Alpenreisen: Erlebnis — Raumtransformationen — Imagination*, ed. by Kurt Luger and Franz Rest (Innsbruck, Vienna and Bozen: Studienverlag, 2017), pp. 213–34 (p. 216).

²¹ Lois Hechenblaikner, *Hinter den Bergen* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2015); Lois Hechenblaikner, *Volks Musik* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2019); Lois Hechenblaikner, *Ischgl* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2020).

²² Conversation with Lois Hechenblaikner, 17 August 2021.

II



FIG. 1. Bull and snowcat, from Lois Hechenblaikner, *Hinter den Bergen*, 2015.
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In the image on the left, a farmer stretches his hand out to a large, horned bull in front of an untouched Alpine landscape. On the right, a man wearing sunglasses crouches to shelter behind the plough of his snowcat with the brand-name PistenBully [bully of the slopes], looking across a gleaming winter landscape (Fig. 1). The positioning of the man in the right-hand image mirrors that in the left-hand image, creating a comic effect in the comparison between the symbiotic relationship of the farmer and his bull, and the man and his PistenBully as a contemporary equivalent. *Hinter den Bergen* is constructed as a series of such juxtapositions or pairings, forging pictorial comparisons between historical photographs by the agrarian engineer Armin Kniely (1907–98) and Hechenblaikner's own, specially composed, counterparts.²³ The title of the series locates the work in a remote rural region: 'behind the mountains' is an idiomatic phrase in German that indicates isolation and remoteness, as well as suggesting something hidden from sight. Indeed, the photographic pairings are uncanny because of the unseen that emerges in their juxtaposition: the invisible and imagined space between the two highlights a transition, in which historical images expose the destructive elements of mass tourism represented by their contemporary doubles. Hechenblaikner's strategy here can be related to the notion of the *Doppelgänger*: based on 'the paradox of encountering oneself as another', the compositional similarity of the two images in the diptych at first emphasizes visual likeness.²⁴ Yet this similarity is intercepted by uncanny glitches: closer consideration of the images allows the interpretative space between the doubles to forge more sinister meanings.

The original purpose of Kniely's works was documentation: first employed

²³ Wolfgang Ullrich, 'Zwei Bilder sagen mehr als tausend Worte', *Hechenblaikner.at* <https://www.hechenblaikner.at/portfolio_page/hinter-den-bergen/> [accessed 20 October 2020].

²⁴ Gry Faurholt, 'Self as Other: The Doppelgänger', *Double Dialogues*, 10 (Summer 2009) <<https://www.doubledialogues.com/article/self-as-other-the-doppelganger/>> [accessed 19 August 2021].

by the chamber of agriculture in Innsbruck in the early 1930s, he later became an independent agrarian journalist who worked until the 1970s, recording ‘Missstände, Fehler wie auch Möglichkeiten’ [grievances, faults as well as opportunities] of agrarian life in the Tyrolean mountains.²⁵ Producing thousands of photographs across a timespan of close to forty years, Kniely’s images can be understood as the Alpine equivalent of what was known as ‘social documentary photography’, a prominent movement across central Europe in the 1930s, predominantly viewed by critics through the lens of left-wing activism.²⁶ Kniely’s work was not aligned with the activist aims of social documentary photography, yet it did correspond with important aspects of the practice in that it documented the ordinary and the everyday and the images taken were not for a tourist market but for the farmers themselves (or their representative bodies).²⁷

Working with Kniely’s archive, Hechenblaikner built *Hinter den Bergen* on historical records of daily life in the Tyrolean Alps. However, the images chosen by Hechenblaikner also frame the past through a lens of rural nostalgia. With smiling groups of people posing for the camera, an impression is created of archaic living standards, yet without emphasizing hardship, nor the slow transformation through tourism that had already begun in the region long before Kniely’s photographs were taken.²⁸ In order to construct a sense of the uncanny in a critique of contemporary mass culture, Hechenblaikner widens the gap between the present and idyllic aspects of the past in order to open up an imaginative space in which the uncanny present can unfold as an eerie double of the past.

Starting out from Kniely’s photographs, Hechenblaikner took new images to ‘match’ Kniely’s or reused works from his own archive. The relations between the pairs of photographs range from the light-hearted to the grotesque: the juxtaposition between the farmer and his bull and the driver and his snowcat primarily underlines the shift of hard manual labour to modern technology, while implying that the farmer’s friendly relationship with the bull has been supplanted by a connection between man and machine. More sinister is the juxtaposition between a religious procession in which a group of men in traditional costume carry a statue of the Virgin Mary and Child, and a female dancer on a pedestal outside an après ski bar, surrounded by a group of male onlookers (Fig. 2).

²⁵ Bernhard Kathan, “‘Hier geht sehr viel Düngerwert verloren!’ Einige Bemerkungen zu Armin Knielys Fotografien”, *Hechenblaikner.at* <https://www.hechenblaikner.at/portfolio_page/hinter-den-bergen/> [accessed 20 October 2020].

²⁶ Jorge Ribalta, *A Hard, Merciless Light: The Worker Photography Movement, 1926–1939* (Madrid: Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2011).

²⁷ Kathan, ‘Hier geht sehr viel Düngerwert verloren!’.

²⁸ Bätzing, ‘Orte guten Lebens’, p. 216.



FIG. 2. Madonna and dancer, from Lois Hechenblaikner, *Hinter den Bergen*, 2015.
Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

By the transference of the Catholic cult of Mary to the male gaze fixed on the dancer, a sense of discomfort is instilled within the implication that even though religious traditions have given way to erotic entertainment culture, life in the Alps remains framed by patriarchal hegemonies.

Creating meaning in the space 'in between' his and Kniely's work, Hechenblaikner engenders a feeling of unease in the viewer, which highlights the shift from a traditional agrarian lifestyle to contemporary Tyrol as a place of mass entertainment. The effect of this juxtaposition recalls the uncanny as 'something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or [...] something strange and unfamiliar arising in a familiar context'.²⁹ Unaccompanied by textual guidance, the content of each image pair must be constructed from the relation between them. The positioning of the images in the pair (Kniely's on the left, Hechenblaikner's on the right) enforces a process in which viewers 'read' the older work first, encountering a scene of archaic rural life captured in grainy black and white before moving on to the sharp and colourful leisure world which the Alps have become. The shift from Kniely's to Hechenblaikner's photograph encompasses the process of constructing a mental image of archaic life in the Alps, then destroying it with the interception of a contemporary 'reality'. It is precisely what we cannot see in the image that forges an uncomfortable reality in which Hechenblaikner's contemporary image suggests that local culture has been replaced by an artificial version of itself that caters primarily to tourists' enjoyment. Working within dualist systems that incorporate notions such as past/present, real/fictional and natural/artificial, *Hinter den Bergen* stages the transformation of the Alpine space as an uncanny simulacrum of itself.

When the series is observed from a more critical distance, some questions of superficiality remain, which add a further dimension of the uncanny. Through their tight construction with the aim of conveying a message in both simple and entertaining terms, the photographic pairs also underline how easily a

²⁹ Royle, *The Uncanny*, p. 1.

comparison can be constructed based on simple visual analogies. Beyond their surface-level comparisons, the uncanny quality of the photographs derives from the viewer's lingering suspicion that there is a darker cynical truth hiding behind a supposedly straightforward hermeneutic process. Emphasizing strange similarities, the paired photographs suggest the effortlessness with which a sense of meaning can be evoked — meaning which might, in the end, turn out to be no more than a glib construct. This additional layer of the uncanny adds a level of complexity to the series, which underpins the difficulty of creating a visual criticism of the 'real' that, in order to function, must deconstruct familiar images in a comprehensible manner.³⁰ Standing at the core of Hechenblaikner's photographic practice, this process of unmasking, pitched against an idealized Alpine image, has a strong presence throughout his work and takes different forms in his individual projects.

III

In *Volks Musik*, the photographer uses portraiture of folk music fans as complex social commentary in which Alpine kitsch represents an uncanny trope of consumerism. Similar to *Hinter den Bergen*, *Volks Musik* is a long-term project which comprises thousands of photographs that Hechenblaikner took at numerous concerts by popular folk musicians in different locations in Tyrol. The project presents contemporary fan culture as a grotesque excess, in which a yearning to escape from everyday reality leads to an unreflected engagement with Alpine kitsch culture. Rather than portraying the stars at the centre of this phenomenon, Hechenblaikner constructs a typology of the fans. In a process which creates an uncomfortable intimacy through a direct style of portraiture, individuals are captured in their immediate environment. A significant point of reference for Hechenblaikner's composition of these portraits is August Sander's monumental work *Antlitz der Zeit* [*Face of our Time*].³¹ Exploring this comparison beyond visual analogies, the uncanny emerges in Hechenblaikner's references to Sander's iconic photographic style, which he closely follows in formal terms in order to present *Schlager* culture as a grotesque and exploitative variant of *Heimat* culture.

First published in 1929, *Antlitz der Zeit* showed a range of portraits that Sander had taken across the previous decade. In total, he produced a series of over 40,000 photographs from the early 1920s to the 1960s, organized by topics such as profession and gender, that was intended to give a comprehensive

³⁰ Julianne Newton, *The Burden of Visual Truth: The Role of Photojournalism in Mediating Reality* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 95–104.

³¹ August Sander, *Antlitz der Zeit* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2008). Martin Hochleitner, 'Wie klingt Volksmusik im Bild', *Hechenblaikner.at* <https://www.hechenblaikner.at/portfolio_page/volksmusik/> [accessed 22 October 2020].

overview of modern humankind.³² With the aim of capturing individuals ‘truthfully’ and ‘in their whole psychology’, Sander’s portraits showed people in their own living or working environments, facing the camera, sometimes as individuals, sometimes in groups.³³ Regardless of profession or social status, the individuals portrayed stand in similar upright postures and, without exception, display a heartfelt seriousness that underlines the photographer’s intention to capture the ‘real’ personalities of his sitters. In one of his best-known portraits, *Bricklayer* (1928, Fig. 3), Sander shows a young man, his upper body lit in sunshine, the lower half in the shadows. Carrying a load of bricks on his shoulder, the man faces the camera, stoical and proud, giving him, a manual labourer, an air of nobility and dignity.

There are remarkable compositional parallels between the stoic portrayal of individuals in *Volks Musik* and *Antlitz der Zeit*. Hechenblaikner captures concert visitors in frontal colour portraits, including individuals, couples, families and friends. They pose in car parks, at open air concerts and *Schlager* festivals (‘Zeltfeste’), facing the camera with a disarming directness (Figs. 4 and 5).

Asking the subjects to adopt stern facial expressions, the photographer references the composition of Sander’s portraits. However, the surroundings and fan club clothing present such a jarring contrast with the individuals’ seriousness that this draws the portraits into the realm of the grotesque. Even though Hechenblaikner maintains an essential element of psychological portraiture in the tradition of Sander — namely, the connection between photographer and photographed through a direct and frontal view — the surrounding circumstances threaten to destroy the subject’s credibility: gesture and frame stand in contrast to each other, forging a sense of discomfort in the incompatibility between costume and expression.

Unlike the subjects in Sander’s monumental portrait project, however, Hechenblaikner’s subjects do not always remain anonymous. He not only makes visible the anonymous fan base that *Schlager* culture is built on but also emphasizes the individuality of those he portrays: each image is accompanied by a description, including names, sometimes professions and places of origin. On the one hand, this information undercuts the anonymity of the subjects as part of the masses in the crowd. It gives them a sense of agency, showing the photographer’s engagement with the sitters and underlining that the portraits were taken by mutual agreement. On the other hand, the cross-section of the

³² Christian Weikop, ‘August Sander’s *Der Bauer* and the Pervasiveness of the Peasant Tradition’, *Tate Papers*, 19 (Spring 2013) <<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/19/august-sanders-der-bauer-and-the-pervasiveness-of-the-peasant-tradition>> [accessed 4 December 2020].

³³ Gabriele Conrath-Scholl and Susanne Lange, “Einen Spiegel der Zeit Schaffen” August Sanders “Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts”, *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, 1.2 (2004) <<https://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/2-2004/4436>> [accessed 20 November 2020].



FIG. 3. August Sander, *Bricklayer*, 1928
© Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur -
August Sander Archive, Cologne; OOAS, Prague, 2021.



FIG. 4. Lois Hechenblaikner, *Völks Musik* [Hiltrud Pfister, (li.) Unterfranken, Beruf: Hausfrau. Anneliese Sörensen, Rentnerin, Schleswig-Holstein. Kastelruther Spatzenfest, Südtirol, 9 Oktober 2009].
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FIG. 5. Lois Hechenblaikner, *Völkis Musik* [Hartmut Lang mit Tochter Andrea aus Rheinland Pfalz, Deutschland. Beruf von Hartmut: Industriereiniger. Kastelruther Spatenfest, Südtirol, 13 Oktober 2007].
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captions does in fact reveal a typology of *Schlager* fan culture: the majority are middle-aged or older, working in manual jobs, and these professions confirm their prevalent representation in popular culture as overweight butchers, hyper-feminine saleswomen and worn-out rockers in early retirement. They resemble stereotypes that might have been drawn from reality TV shows: women ‘dolled-up’ in mini dirndl dresses matched with cowboy boots, old men in leather trousers and rock T-shirts, large bodies stuck in fan T-shirts too small for their frame. *Volks Musik* assembles not only a range of individuals but also an array of unusual ways of dressing, which in sum portray *Schlager* as an Alpine mass culture related to a specific socio-cultural milieu. Recalling Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgement of Taste* (1980), the series contemplates the distinctive aesthetic of this milieu, dwelling on figures who appear to embrace kitsch culture wholeheartedly.³⁴ Although the inherent positioning of viewers as voyeurs of *Schlager* escapism runs the risk of representing an exploitative photographic practice, Hechenblaikner has recorded in conversations and longer interviews that his subjects do not take issue with their photographs.³⁵ In the context of the everyday, they see their portraits as records of *Schlager*-fandom and all its quirks, which they accept as part of the fan culture that they subscribe to as a form of escapism.

As folk-style popular music with notably kitschy content which creates a plastic, rose-coloured world of simplistic sentimentality, *Schlager* is a million-Euro industry. Its flagship event, the ‘Musikantenstadl’ [minstrels’ barn], a commercial brand and TV show featuring easy listening/popular folk music, ran from 1981 until 2015 on Austrian, German and Swiss primetime television.³⁶ While not all of its representatives are linked to the Alpine space, some of its most prominent figures, such as the former Alpine skier Hansi Hinterseer, embody the commercialization of Alpine culture as a form of consumable kitsch.³⁷ The extent to which this is celebrated lies at the core of *Volks Musik*. Hechenblaikner features hand-knitted fan sweaters and groups of fans who hike the Alps in Hinterseer’s name; he exposes the cult of *Schlager* as an all-encompassing and time-consuming activity, living off the devotion of a hardcore fan base.

In a brief essay introducing *Volks Musik*, Wolfgang Ullrich has suggested that the unusual ‘fan fashion’ of Hechenblaikner’s subjects exposes the cruelty of

³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

³⁵ Conversation with LH, 17 August 2021.

³⁶ Susanne Binder and Gebhard Fartacek, ‘Der Musikantenstadl als die unerforschte Visitenkarte Österreichs — Einleitung’, in *Der Musikantenstadl: Alpine Populärkultur im fremden Blick*, ed. by Susanne Binder and Gebhard Fartacek (Vienna: LIT-Verlag, 2006), pp. 14–23.

³⁷ See Gillo Dorfles, ‘Tourism and Nature’, in *Kitsch: An Anthology of Bad Taste*, ed. by Gillo Dorfles (London: Studio Vista, 1968), pp. 153–55.

capitalist consumer culture when preying on the lower social classes.³⁸ He sees a ‘sinister force’ behind the fandom on display as pointing to infantilizing effects of consumer culture, especially on a less educated section of society.³⁹ The uncanny effect conjured in the contrast between the awkward fashion and the individuals’ sincere expressions in the portraits thus becomes a critique of fast capitalism in the Alps, a positioning that has also been affirmed from within the *Schlager* scene. In 1997, the mayor of the Tyrolean market town Mayrhofen prohibited an exhibition of *Volks Musik* amid fears that the show would harm the town’s reputation for its tourists. Moreover, the *Schlager* band Zillertaler Schürzenjäger [Zillertal philanderers] called on its fans to sue Hechenblaikner for libel because of the way he portrayed them, but without success: none of the fans photographed took issue with their portrait.⁴⁰

The devotion of the *Schlager* fans to their idols visualized in *Volks Musik* has also sparked comparisons with political mass movements. By association, this takes *Schlager* culture in *Volks Musik* closer to the dominant point of criticism within *Anti-Heimat* culture: it may serve as a platform for repressed right-wing ideology, allowing it to surface — not infrequently — within mainstream culture. In conversation with the cultural philosopher Mădălina Diaconu, Hechenblaikner has pointed out that the idealized notions of a wholesome *Heimat* promoted at *Schlager* concerts come with a political side-angle. He refers to a T-shirt sold to fans of the Zillertaler Schürzenjäger with the slogan ‘Der Traum jedes Flüchtlings ist: Dahoam is dahoam’ [Every refugee’s dream is: home is home].⁴¹ Beyond the deep cynicism of this slogan, and the highly politicized connotations of ‘dahoam’, it captures associations between *Schlager* and right-wing political parties. In their analysis of Andreas Gabalier, the popular folk musician, Markus Rheindorf and Ruth Wodak have shown that Gabalier contributes to the ‘culturalization of extreme-right ideologies on a grand scale’.⁴² Gabalier’s remarkable success as ‘Alpine rocker’ associated with the far-right Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs [Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ] represents an extreme example in terms of his young fanbase and his

³⁸ Wolfgang Ullrich, ‘Gegen Überheblichkeit und Zynismus: Wie Lois Hechenblaikner Fans volkstümlicher Musik fotografiert’, *Hechenblaikner.at* <https://www.hechenblaikner.at/portfolio_page/volksmusik/> [accessed 20 October 2020].

³⁹ Benjamin Barber, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2007), pp. 3–36.

⁴⁰ Bayrhammer, ‘Der Thomas Bernhard der Jodelindustrie’. In turn, Hechenblaikner sued the band — and won — for breach of copyright: his photographs had been reprinted in the fan magazine without permission.

⁴¹ Mădălina Diaconu, ‘Zur Ästhetik des Musikantenstadls’, in *Der Musikantenstadl: Alpine Populärkultur im fremden Blick*, ed. by Susanne Binder and Gebhard Fartacek (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2006), pp. 155–228 (p. 209).

⁴² Markus Rheindorf and Ruth Wodak, ‘“Austria First” Revisited: A Diachronic Cross-Sectional Analysis of the Gender and Body Politics of the Extreme Right’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 53.3 (2019), 302–20 (p. 316).

outspoken politics.⁴³ However, associations between *Schlager* and right-wing populism have found broad appeal in recent years, and even though Gabalier is the most prominent example, he is not an *Einzelfall* [singular case], as the FPÖ habitually calls its links to right-wing extremism.⁴⁴ In 2015, for example, a song by the Zillertaler Schürzenjäger was used with altered lyrics to promote the FPÖ's xenophobic and Islamophobic politics online, underlining once more that *Heimat* nostalgia, so heavily promoted by the *Schlager* industry, offers an accessible platform for the politics of the far right.⁴⁵ Returning to Hechenblaikner's *Volks Musik*, the series confirms prevailing stereotypes of right-wing populism as a phenomenon to which those with a low standard of education are particularly susceptible. On a political level, too, therefore, the photographer challenges the way the *Schlager* industry helps perpetuate certain ideologies, wrapped in a comfort blanket of *Heimat* ideals for disadvantaged social groups in search of escapism.

Hechenblaikner's *Schlager* fans and the grotesque characters representing both locals and holidaymakers also find parallels in Mitterer's *Die Piefke-Saga*. Focusing on a family of 'typical Germans' holidaying every summer and winter in a 'typical Tyrolean village', *Die Piefke-Saga* thematizes the sell-out of 'Alpine authenticity' for a fast-paced model of mass tourism. The Alps become a kitsch copy of themselves to the point where Tyrol only exists as a replica, while a small group of guerrilla rebels are the only 'real' Tyrolians left. When the story was first shown as a four-part programme on Austrian and German television, its hyperbolic and grotesque representation of the tourist industry caused outrage, yet in recent years, it has not only become a cult film, but also an eerie foreshadowing of the transformation of Tyrol into a region that is dependent on selling an artificial image of itself. It is easy to recognize counterparts of Mitterer's German tourists who enthusiastically wait to be entertained by grotesque forms of Tyrolean 'authenticity', as well as the local population that sells off family, home and country for profit, in Hechenblaikner's photographs. Indeed, in conjunction with the transformation of the Tyrolean landscape traced in *Hinter den Bergen*, *Volks Musik* affirms Mitterer's warnings through a tightly stylized form of documentary photography, exposing the construction

⁴³ Michael Weber, 'Überschreitungen bei Andreas Gabalier: Musikalische, kulturelle und gesellschaftliche Aspekte', in *Darüber hinaus ... Populäre Musik und Überschreitung(en)*, ed. by Stefanie Alich, Susanne Binas-Preisendörfer and Werner Jauk (Oldenburg: BIS-Verlag, 2018), pp. 91–114.

⁴⁴ Mauthausen Committee Austria, 'Broschüre "Viele Einzelfälle = Ein Muster"', *Mauthausen Committee Austria* <<https://www.mkoe.at/rechtsextremismus/broschuere-viele-einzelfaelle-ein-muster>> [accessed 2 December 2020].

⁴⁵ FPÖ Watch, 'Wie mit einem rechtsextremen Lied Werbung für die FPÖ gemacht wird', *medium.com* <<https://medium.com/@fpoeticker/wie-mit-einem-rechtsextremen-lied-werbung-für-die-fpö-gemacht-wird-23ceaaa80c07>> [accessed 2 December 2020]; Anton Shekhovstov, 'European Far-Right Music and its Enemies', in *Analysing Fascist Discourse: European Fascism in Talk and Text*, ed. by Ruth Wodak and John E. Richardson, (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 277–96.

of an Alpine image which has been severed from its earlier context yet remains a deformed double of it.

IV

The culmination of Hechenblaikner's presentation of the Alpine landscape as an uncanny double of itself is his series, *Ischgl*. An international après-ski hotspot, Ischgl also became a hotspot of Covid-19 transmission after local officials failed to implement safety measures for fear of harming the tourist industry in early March 2020.⁴⁶ While the unravelling of these events *per se* is not thematized in Hechenblaikner's photo-book *Ischgl*, his photographs are the poster image for the ills of mass tourism in the Alps, which, as the pandemic revealed, did not halt amid health concerns for its consumers, much less its employees, until the very last minute.⁴⁷

Counting an annual profit of €250 million with over 1.4 million overnight stays in a place of just over 1,500 inhabitants, Ischgl symbolizes Alpine tourism gone wild.⁴⁸ In precisely this function, the town's ruthless entertainment industry, long advertised by its brand slogan 'Relax. If you can', stands at the centre of Hechenblaikner's photographs.⁴⁹ In contrast to his other projects, which focused on specific themes such as *Schlager* fandom, Alpine wellness culture or the disappearance of glaciers, *Ischgl* is dedicated to a multi-faceted portrait of the town in ski season, recorded as a long-term study of over two decades. The images are without description, and, in contrast to the consistent image compositions in projects such as *Volks Musik*, include a range of different formats that capture the touristic mayhem in its full breadth: starting out with distant mountains in the snow, the series slowly moves towards the epicentre of events until the camera is positioned amid a crowd of people watching a concert on a distant stage, the snow-covered mountains framing the scene in the background. From this point onwards images are recorded from the middle of

⁴⁶ Steffen Arora and Fabian Somavilla, 'Im Kitzloch hatten mehrere Mitarbeiter schon im Februar "grippeähnliche Symptome"', *Der Standard*, 20 May 2020 <<https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000117613538/im-kitzloch-hatten-mehrere-mitarbeiter-schon-im-februar-grippeaehnliche-symptome>> [accessed 3 December 2020].

⁴⁷ Debates about the (ir)responsibility of ski tourism during the pandemic continued in the winter season 2020/21. See for example Nora Laufer, Andreas Schnauder and Leopold Stefan, 'Skination Österreich in Aufruhr: Pisten wegen Corona sperren?', *Der Standard*, 26 November 2020 <<https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000121992730/angriff-auf-die-skination-oesterreichskipisten-in-ganz-europa-sperren?ref=rec>> [accessed 3 December 2020].

⁴⁸ Data from Stephan Gmünder, 'Delirium Alpinum', in Lois Hechenblaikner, *Ischgl*, (Göttingen: Steidl, 2020), n.p. Online version: Stefan Gmünder, 'Ischgl — Delirium Alpinum', *Volltext*, 9 June 2020, paragraph 2 <<https://volltext.net/texte/stephan-gmuender-lois-hechenblaikner-delirium-alpinum/>> [accessed 11 September 2021].

⁴⁹ Following the Covid scandal, the slogan has now been removed from the Ischgl website: <<https://www.ischgl.com/en>> [last accessed 19 August 2021].



FIG. 6. Men in costume from Lois Hechenblaikner, *Ischgl*, 2020.
Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

things, including blurry close-ups of people falling over in the snow, mountains of empty beer kegs and (predominantly male) groups in inappropriate costumes, dressed as native Americans, pashas or pharaohs (Fig. 6).

Hechenblaikner's *Ischgl* photo-book uses a combination of different aesthetic strategies to capture the tumultuous atmosphere that suffused the town's skiing season until the pandemic called it to an abrupt halt. Recalling the image diptychs of *Hinter den Bergen*, *Ischgl* juxtaposes images on opposite pages, strengthening the compositional elements as well as content. This technique is particularly successful in photographs of advertising posters for entertainment evenings and restaurants: women in underwear stand in front of pristine Alpine landscapes, interchangeably called 'Haserl' [bunnies], 'hübsche Girls' [pretty girls] and 'Hexen' [witches], while other posters promise affordable Tyrolean culinary specialities (Fig. 7).

It is an image of excess, addressing the tourist as a thrifty, heterosexual man who likes a bargain, excessive drinking and easy erotic adventures. Mass tourism in Ischgl, or so the photographs show, builds on the easy fulfilment of primitive needs. Indeed, the hotelier Günther Aloys encouraged other hotel owners in the town to 'mit dem Penis zu denken' [think with their penis] in order to create an 'Epizentrum touristischer Utopien' [epicentre of touristic



FIG. 7. Advertising from Lois Hechenblaikner, *Ischgl*, 2020 [photo originally taken in 1996]. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

utopias].⁵⁰ While the reconfiguration of the Alpine space for mass culture builds on an underlying estrangement of familiar tropes of tradition, such as folk costumes and music, other aspects thus remain strikingly stable, the most notable being its patriarchal structure. Women feature as dancers or in erotic poses, on posters advertising striptease or at the mercy of men attempting to touch them inappropriately. Quite clearly, the ‘winter paradise’ Ischgl focuses on the heterosexual male visitor, while women are accessories to the perfect holiday it promises.

A sense of this uninhibited masculinity is also visible in the group portraits. Hechenblaikner uses a similar composition to *Volks Musik*, namely frontal and full-body portraits in which those photographed look directly at the camera. However here the sincerity of the subject’s portrayal is lost as people jokingly pose in front of the camera or try to ‘impress’ with explicit sexual poses and gestures. Intersecting the relentless party scenes and records of environmental pollution as their consequence, the photographs of the facilitators of tourism inevitably create parallels with *Die Piefke-Saga*:⁵¹ the local folk band in full costume playing at the opening of a new funicular, which is consecrated by the

⁵⁰ Günther Aloys cited in Stefan Gmünder, ‘Ischgl — Delirium Alpium’, paragraph 15.

⁵¹ Andreas Lesti, ‘Unterwerfung und Größenwahn’, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13 September 2020, <<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/reise/mit-felix-mitterer-autor-der-piefke-saga-im-zillertal-16948357.html>> [accessed 3 December 2020].



FIG. 8. From Lois Hechenblaikner, *Ischgl*, 2020.
Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

local priest, or the pronouncedly rustic interiors of restaurants and bars. As the images imply, local customs and traditions have become part of the tourist spectacle, transformed into a farce of themselves — uncanny doubles at the service of a mass industry.⁵²

Merging landscape photography, portraiture, reportage and fast-paced event photography, the different viewpoints in *Ischgl* replicate the tumultuous excesses of après ski. The contrast between the town's representation on the official Ischgl website and Hechenblaikner's book is especially striking. Whereas the latter shows hordes of people unable to control bodily functions after alcoholic excess, the former recommends quaint architectural landmarks. Whereas the website promotes 'wildromantisch[e]' [wildly romantic] chapels, churches and art walks, the epilogue of *Ischgl* consists of police reports recording theft and grievous bodily harm as a result of après ski excess.⁵³

As a multilayered record, *Ischgl* constitutes a dossier of the many different issues tied to the Alpine sell-off. The images that emphasize this most effectively

⁵² Anita Zehrer, 'Authentizität — Inszenierung: Die subjektive Wahrnehmung des touristischen Produktes', in *Tourismus im Spannungsfeld von Polaritäten*, ed. by Roman Egger and Thomas Herdin (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2010), pp. 259–60.

⁵³ 'Culture And History as Far as the Eye Can See: Places of Interest in Ischgl', *ischgl.com* <<https://www.ischgl.com>> [accessed 3 December 2020]; 'LPD Presseaussendung', in *Ischgl*, n.p.

are also those that best capture a sense of the uncanny: photographs that look behind the scenes, including empty bars in daylight, the machine rooms that supply alcohol to the front rooms and the heaps of rubbish left when everyone has gone (Fig. 8).

This is the ugly side of mass tourism, which normally remains beneath a façade of eroticized *Heimat* kitsch. As he steps behind the bars, funicular railway stations and restaurants, Hechenblaikner excavates an uncanny scene normally hidden from sight. Empty and deserted, the spaces he captures in these photographs reveal the uncomfortable truth behind the tourist's world: warning signs, rubbish and spotless, high-tech machinery that keep the illusion running. Looking at this side of *Ischgl*, the humanoids in *Die Piefke-Saga* all of a sudden no longer seem quite as absurd.

Apart from revealing the environmental damage and clinical operations facilitating the escapist surface, 'behind the scenes' *Ischgl* gains yet another facet of the uncanny in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Beyond the touristic excess in the photographs of wild parties, the desolate spaces, photographed before the pandemic, retrospectively evoke the eerie emptiness that set in after tourists finally stayed away from *Ischgl*, as well the wider effect of lockdowns on a global scale. *Ischgl* thus accrues wider allegorical meaning in a fast-paced world that was brought to a standstill by an invisible virus. Hechenblaikner's photographs capture the sense of interruption from 'normality' on multiple levels: on the one hand, the excessive holidays in themselves are an uncanny version of *Heimat* ideals, half-familiar, half-strange. On the other hand, the spaces behind the nights of excess reveal another sub-level of a technologized and desolate environment, which in turn reveals the holidaymaker's paradise to be a highly destructive surface. The context of the Covid-19 pandemic further heightens this sense of the uncanny, in relation both to the party atmosphere as 'a perfect petri dish for the spread of the new coronavirus'⁵⁴ and to its after-effects. The absence of humans in the *Ischgl* photographs taken behind the scenes not only recalls the dramatic outcome a skiing holiday in the town had for many visitors — literally 'erasing' people when one takes account of at least twenty-five deaths — but also the invisibility of the virus itself as an uncontrollably natural force intercepting modern life. Indeed, as the psychoanalyst Joseph Dodds has remarked, 'the virus introduces us to the ecological uncanny, where the once-familiar but now-repressed of nonhuman nature returns to haunt us.'⁵⁵ *Ischgl*, in this light, eerily visualizes the risks taken by the tourist industry to safeguard

⁵⁴ Harry McGee, 'The First Eight Days: How The Coronavirus Pandemic Struck Ireland', *The Irish Times*, 5 March 2021, <<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/the-first-eight-days-how-the-coronavirus-pandemic-struck-ireland-1.4502229>> [accessed 19 August 2021].

⁵⁵ Joseph Dodds, 'Elemental Catastrophe: Ecopsychanalysis and the Viral Uncanny of Covid-19', *Stillpoint Magazine*, 4 (2020) <<https://stillpointmag.org/articles/elemental-catastrophe-ecopsychanalysis-and-the-viral-uncanny-of-covid-19/>> [accessed 19 August 2021].

its image and profits. It relates to the viewer's knowledge that in these locations and through these parties, the virus could easily spread from Ischgl to Iceland, and beyond — the promise of a joyful Alpine escape is tainted by an invisible threat with an unpredictable effect on the individual human body.⁵⁶

V

Pointing out the uncanny effect of architectural simulations, Nelson Graburn, Maria Gravari-Barbas and Jean-François Staszak have argued that the tension between familiarity and alterity 'is what makes tourism attractive and what encourages planners and designers to create duplitecture in tourist destinations'.⁵⁷ For Austria, the best example for this is the replica of the small town Hallstatt, which was copied in China's Guangdong province in 2011 and has since served as a symbol for Austria's touristic sell-off.⁵⁸ In Hechenblaikner's photographic work, the tension between familiarity and alterity at the centre of the tourist industry is central, too, albeit in different form. Across his work, the familiarity with a normative image of *Heimat* undergoes a deconstruction process, which cuts across the wholesome, idealized image projected by mass advertisement.

Hechenblaikner subverts familiar images within a tight concept of visual representation. The uncanny takes the form of strange doubles, as in the photographic pairs of *Hinter den Bergen*, and of alterity within the familiar in the exposure of Alpine *Heimat* images as commercial kitsch in *Volks Musik*. In *Ischgl*, these different strategies merge in the focus on a specific time and place — Ischgl during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, where the earlier series are, in Hechenblaikner's own terms, long-time studies of 'photographic anthropology' of the Tyrolean tourist industry, *Ischgl* takes on much more acute significance, as the series also implies the gap between public health responsibilities and greed for profit, which ultimately transformed Ischgl from a holiday utopia into a coronavirus superspreading hotbed. Far from a carefree *Heimat* sell-out for snow- and fun-seekers, Ischgl's role in the global pandemic inevitably accompanies the photographs as another facet of the uncanny in Hechenblaikner's work.

The photographer's Alpine world overall records a Tyrol that is wholly estranged from its public presentation. Poignantly dissecting *Heimat* as a commercial product, Hechenblaikner uses the uncanny to excavate the dark

⁵⁶ Jakob Winter, 'Mails aus Island zeigen: Tirol reagierte zu spät', *profil*, 4 May 2020, <<https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/coronavirus-mails-island-tirol-ischgl-11465200>> [accessed 3 December 2020].

⁵⁷ Nelson Graburn, Gravari-Barbas Maria and Staszak Jean-François, 'Simulacra, Architecture, Tourism and the Uncanny', *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 17.1 (2019), 1–12 (p. 9).

⁵⁸ Graml, *Revisiting Austria*, Ch. 8.

sides of Alpine tourism and mass consumerism, while serial photography and long-term projects create a wide-angled view that enforces the unprecedented scale and impact of these phenomena. With what might be termed ‘*Anti-Heimat* photography’ Hechenblaikner has thus forged a new genre in which the uncanny is a central force in critically reappraising *Heimat* and tourist ideals.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ This article is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 786314). I would also like to thank Lois Hechenblaikner for his support in the preparation of this article.