

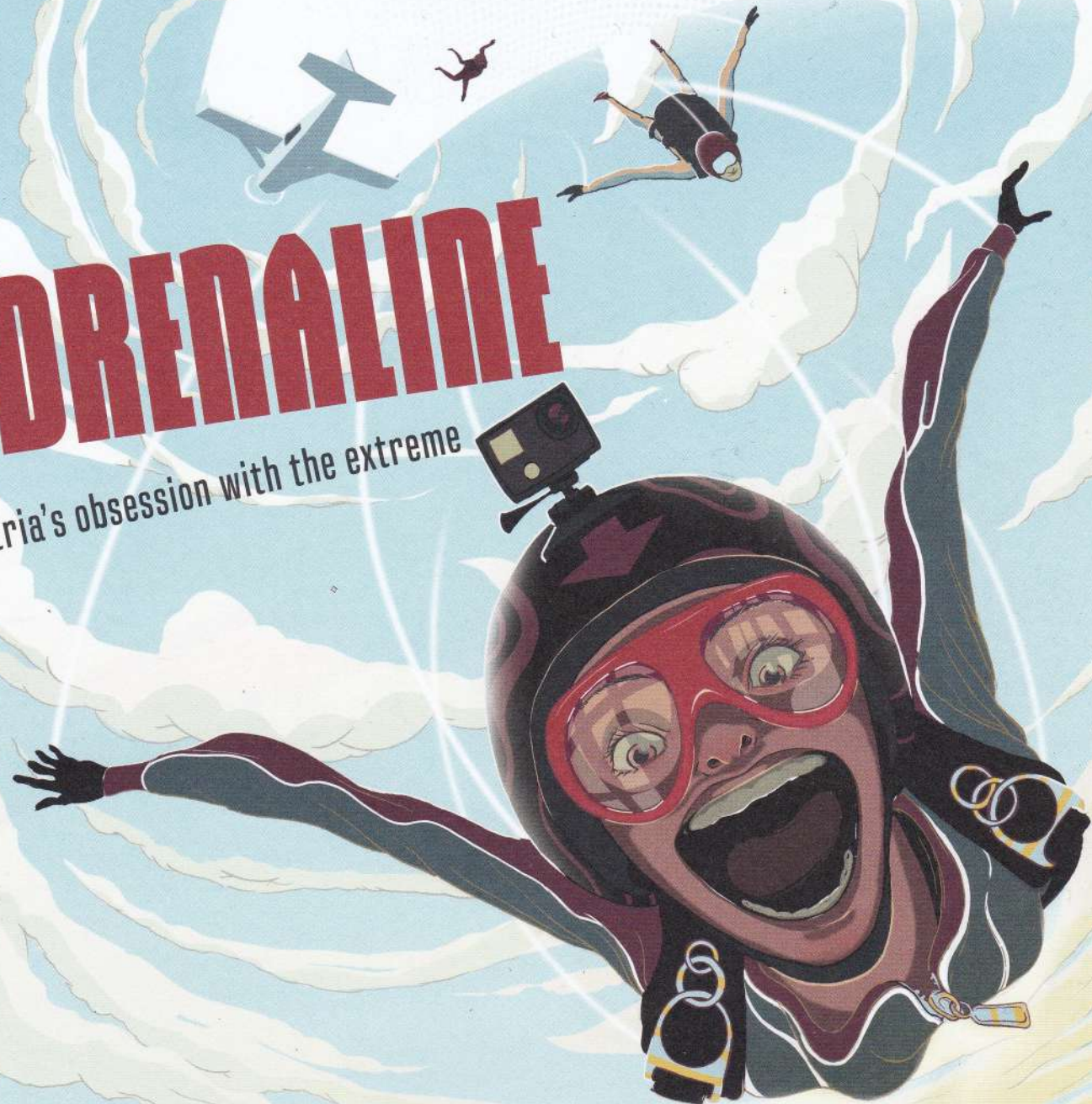
METROPOLE

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ADRENALINE

Austria's obsession with the extreme



Cornelia Dworak

Stuntwoman

"I have to move, movement is my thing. Even if I see someone on the street and I like the way they're walking, I have to try it out. If I have my MP3 player on, I have to dance, even on the subway."

When someone asks Cornelia Dworak to jump, she answers, "How high?" – literally.

Whether it involves bungee jumping, parachuting, scuba diving or sword-play, over the past 10 years, Dworak, 36, has learned that choreographing stunts for films and TV requires a combination of preparation and on-the-spot adaptability. With experience, she has realized that this last is the most crucial in the Austrian film and TV industry, where big budgets and blockbuster action films are rare.

"When I coach action scenes, sometimes there's a rehearsal on set on the day of the shoot, if at all. Sometimes I don't even get to see the actors in advance."

Colleagues from other countries are often appalled, but Dworak thinks these challenges have made her better at the job. And perhaps even in life. "I'm very good at solving problems spontaneously," she said, evidenced by the fabulous photo of she managed to stage for us in 10 minutes.

But not all actors who do stunts are as confident, so Dworak has learned how to help them to be less afraid – using what she calls "social intelligence" to connect with people and understand their needs. "Sometimes it's just about holding their hand, other times it's about talking it through with a structured plan."

Tall, lean, and lanky, Dworak has honed almost perfect control of her movements, and she's never been injured on set. Insurance companies, sadly, don't seem to understand this, and she's been unable to find coverage.

Which is very frustrating. "My body is my material," she says, "I earn my money though moving. So I'm very careful with my body and therefore less likely to be injured than a normal person."

This doesn't keep Dworak from moving. In fact, she can't even remember a time when she hasn't moved. When she's not doing stunts, she's dancing, or teaching others. She thinks in motion.

And with that – even on only three hours sleep – she was off to teach a hip-hop class.

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