

KATHRIN RESETARITS

SOPHIE STOCKINGER

DOMINIK WARTA

L'ANIMALE

EIN FILM VON KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN

MIT Sophie Stockinger, Kathrin Resetarits, Dominik Warta, Julia Franz Richter, Jack Hofer, Stefan Pohl, Dominic Maus Singer, Simon Morzé DREHBUCH und REGIE Katharina Mueckstein KAMERA Michael Schindegger SCHNITT Natalie Schwager SZENENBILD Katharina Haring KOSTÜMBILD Monika Buttinger MASKE Evgenia Popova, Julia Böhm CASTING Rita Waszilovic LICHT Kim Jerrett FARBEN Andi Winter TON Hjalti Bager Jonathansson SOUNDDESIGN Hjalti Bager Jonathansson, Karim Weth TONMISCHUNG Alexander Koller FILMMUSIK B.Fleischmann DRAMATURGIE Libertad Hackl PRODUKTIONSLEITUNG Gerhard Hannak HERSTELLUNGSLEITUNG Flavio Marchetti PRODUZENTINNEN Michael Kitzberger, Wolfgang Widenhofer, Flavio Marchetti, Nikolaus Geyrhofer, Markus Glaser, Michael Schindegger, Natalie Schwager, Katharina Mueckstein EINE PRODUKTION der NGF Nikolaus Geyrhofer Filmproduktion GmbH und La Banda Film OG

L'ANIMALE

A FILM BY KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN

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L'ANIMALE

A FILM BY KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN



L'ANIMALE IS A FILM ABOUT THE CONTRADICTING FORCES WITHIN US: PASSION, DESIRE, REASON

Mati and her boy gang on their tuned motocross bikes are the terror of their village and make life difficult for all the girls. But when Sebastian, the leader of the pack, falls in love with Mati and she becomes friends with Carla, one of the victims of their needling, Mati runs the risk of losing her place with the boys. At the same time, a deeply hidden secret stands between Mati's parents, and the two of them must decide: What counts for more, seeming or being?

L'ANIMALE

A FILM BY KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN



SYNOPSIS

A FILM ABOUT THE CONTRADICTING FORCES WITHIN US: PASSION, DESIRE, REASON

It looks like everybody has found their place in life: Mati and her gang of boys feel like the heroes of their village riding around on their tuned motocross bikes. Mati's parents – Gabriele, a veterinarian and Paul, a surveyor, are firmly established and only have to finalize the last work on the construction of their new house.

But when Mati meets Carla, her world becomes unstable. The encounter with the independent girl shows Mati who she could really be: alive and open, and very different from her competitive, demonstratively cool friends. To complicate things further, Mati's best friend Sebastian falls in love with her and wants her to change from buddy to lover. Will Mati now lose her place in her male circle of friends?

In the meantime, the world of her parents also threatens to break apart. Gabriele discovers Paul's best-kept secret. Will the situation pass, or should she confront him directly? Paul, too, is increasingly under pressure to face his very own truth.

In the end, all characters face the same decision: what counts for more, seeming or being?

Katharina Mueckstein once again proves herself as a subtle seismograph of social realities – and just as in Mueckstein's debut "Talea", shooting-star Sophie Stockinger is a godsend for the film. Kathrin Resetarits, Dominik Warta and Julia Franz Richter star in additional roles.

L'ANIMALE

A FILM BY KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

L'ANIMALE IS A FILM ABOUT THE SOCIAL CONVENTIONS CONSTRAINING US AND THE QUESTION OF IF, AND HOW, WE CAN FREE OURSELVES.

While I was working on the script to L'ANIMALE I was preoccupied with one of the big contradictions of our times: we idealize individualism but at the same time subject ourselves to strong external constraints, often without even noticing. Not so long ago, it was absolutely clear what we should rebel against – conventions, injustice, subjugation. Today, it is more complex and more difficult to grasp what makes us unfree. The characters in L'ANIMALE are objectively free to do what they want. But internally, they fight against a feeling of not being free to choose and a longing for change and truthfulness.

As an author, the question of how to be human interests me wherever wanting something and being expected to do something collide, and where characters waver between anxiety and courage. The evolution of conventions, opinions and structures of social living is first and foremost based on emotions. In my films, I try to make visible this interaction between the personal and the political.

During my work on L'ANIMALE, I often thought of costume dramas and of the tragical figures in 19th century love stories that narrate the impossibility of being in a world ruled by strict conventions. L'ANIMALE is my personal answer to the question of how free we, as modern people, really are.

I see ourselves – and hence also the characters in my story – as living in constant and conflicting doubt. We know what is expected of us, what is supposedly good and right for us. We are nothing if not adaptable to circumstance. We want to please and be respected. We are sensitive and are often afraid. We have learned well to control our inner lives, our desires and emotions, and to be rational. If need be, we are willing to suppress parts of our inner lives to please the outside world. We think we can minimize risk in this manner. We think big but make ourselves small.

However, authenticity requires confrontation, emancipation demands effort, progress needs courage. Traditional gender roles and sexual norms are enormously restrictive in this context and only slowly become more porous. Individual resistance, the courage to liberate one's identity and sexuality from social norms of self-optimization and adaptation – that is the greatest revolutionary potential in our times.

In his song L'ANIMALE, Franco Battiato sings plaintively about the animal within himself. The animal stands for that which we carry inside ourselves, which steers us whether we want to or not. Battiato's voice could be the voice of any of the characters in the film. They all feel the chasm between reason and inner desire. In contrast to human beings, an animal does not have a repertoire to hide its emotions, it doesn't reflect upon questions of reason, and hence it only knows its own authentic being.

The utopia of L'ANIMALE is a human fighting to find a fitting place for his/ her innermost essence in the external world. Someone who can combine the three forces of passion, desire and reason in order to become free.

Katharina Mueckstein

L'ANIMALE

A FILM BY KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN



L'ANIMALE. A FILM BY KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN

(A 2018, 96 MIN, GERMAN OV)

RELEASE AUSTRIA: MARCH 16, 2018

Starring

Sophie Stockinger, Kathrin Resetarits, Dominik Warta, Julia Franz Richter, Jack Hofer, Stefan Pohl, Dominic Marcus Singer, Simon Morzé, Eva Herzig, David Oberkogler, Martina Spitzer, Lisa C. Nemeč, Johanna Orsini-Rosenberg, Gisela Salcher, Alexandra Schmidt

Director and script

Katharina Mueckstein

Photography

Michael Schindegger

Editor

Natalie Schwager

Dramaturg

Libertad Hackl

Casting

Rita Waszilovics

Set design

Katharina Haring

Costume design

Monika Buttinger

Make-up

Jenny Popova, Julia Böhm

Sound

Hjalti Bager-Jonathansson

Music

B. Fleischmann

Sound mixing

Alexander Koller

Production management

Gerhard Hannak

Line producer

Flavio Marchetti

Producers

Michael Kitzberger, Wolfgang Widerhofer, Flavio Marchetti, Nikolaus Geyrhalter, Markus Glaser, Michael Schindegger, Natalie Schwager, Katharina Mueckstein

Production

NGF - Nikolaus Geyrhalter Filmproduktion GmbH
La Banda Film OG

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Land Niederösterreich Kultur

WWW.LANIMALE.COM

L'ANIMALE

A FILM BY KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN

BIOGRAPHY

KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN

born 1982 in Vienna. Studied Philosophy and Gender Studies, 2004–2010 Directing at Filmakademie Wien, Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst. 2010 Co-Founder of production company La Banda Film. 2013 START-STIPENDIUM for Cinema Art by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Art and Culture.



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FILMOGRAPHY

- 2019 **FEMINISM WTF** – documentary, 90 min., produced by La Banda Film – in production
- 2018 **L'ANIMALE** – fiction feature, 96 min., produced by NGF Geyrhalterfilm and La Banda Film
- 2013 **TALEA** – fiction feature, 75 min., produced by La Banda Film

FESTIVAL APPEARANCES & AWARDS:

Filmfestival Max Ophüls Preis 2013 / Main Competition / Preis der Saarländischen Ministerpräsidentin / Best Director

Diagonale 2013 / Best Costume

Milan International Filmfestival Sguardi Altrove 2014 / Competition / Special mention by the Jury

Sarajevo International Filmfestival 2013 / Competition

Zürich International Filmfestival 2013 / Competition

Kiyv International Filmfestival Molodist 2013 / Competition

Thessaloniki International Filmfestival 2013 / New Horizons

Int. Frauenfilmfestival Köln-Dortmund 2014 / Competition

Nomination for the Austrian Film Awards 2014 for Best Direction and Best Script

- 2008 **DIE VEREINIGUNG** – short film, 30 min., produced by: Barbara Nehoda/Flavio Marchetti
Filmakademie Wien – AWARDS: Thomas Pluch Förderpreis 2009

PRODUCER, SCRIPTWRITER, CONSULTANT

- 2016 **HOLZ ERDE FLEISCH** – consultant, producer – documentary, 72 Min.
Director: Sigmund Steiner, produced by: La Banda Film
AWARDS: Diagonale 2016 / Best Documentary, Vienna Film Award 2016,
Viennale 2016 / Best German-language Film, DOK.Fest Munich 2016 / DOK.deutsch Award, Austrian Film
Award 2017 / Best Documentary
- 2017 **TIERE UND ANDERE MENSCHEN** – co-author, producer – documentary, 88 min.
Director: Flavio Marchetti, produced by: La Banda Film
AWARDS: Duisburger Filmwoche 2017 / 3sat Documentary Award

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BIOGRAPHY

SOPHIE STOCKINGER

born 1997 in Vienna. Workshop on acting and role preparation with Michaela Rosen. 2017 nominated for a ROMY in der category "Best Emerging Actress".



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THEATER

since 2013 Member of the Jungen Ensemble Hörbiger (JÖH)
2013/2014 Member of the junge Burg
2012/2013 Member of the junge Burg
2008–2012 Member of the ensemble of the cultural association GUTGEBRÜLLT

FILMOGRAPHY

2018 L'ANIMALE – feature, 96 min., Director: Katharina Mueckstein, produced by: NGF Geyrhalterfilm / La Banda Film
2016 DAS SACHER – Director: Robert Dornhelm, MRfilm/MOOVIE/ORF/ZDF
2015 DIE STILLE DANACH – Director: Nikolaus Leytner, Allegro Film/ORF/MDR
2015 DIE KINDER DER VILLA EMMA – Director: Nikolaus Leytner, Graffilm/ORF/ARD
2014 MEINE FREMDE FRAU – Director: Lars Becker, MONAfilm/ORF/ZDF
2013 SCHNELL ERMITTELT – Director: Andreas Kopriva, MRFilm/ORF
2013 TALEA – feature, 75 min., Director: Katharina Mueckstein, produced by: La Banda Film

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A FILM BY KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN

BIOGRAPHY

KATHRIN RESETARITS

born 1973 in Vienna. Studied directing at the Vienna Film Academy. Best Actress Award at Cinessonne Festival Paris 2005 for "Crash Test Dummies" and nominated as Austrian Shooting-Star of European Cinema at Berlinale 2006. Artistic Assistant to Michael Haneke since 2001. Since „Ich tanze nicht“ (1999) she collaborates on the productions of her father as co-author. Her script for the film „Licht“ is nominated for an Austrian Film Award 2018.



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SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2018 | L'ANIMALE - feature, 96 min., director: Katharina Mueckstein, produced by: NGF Geyrhalterfilm / La Banda Film |
| 2017 | LICHT - feature, 97 min., director: Barbara Albert / script: Kathrin Resetarits
Produced by: NGF Geyrhalterfilm |
| 2010 | SCHNELL ERMITTELT - director: Andreas Kopriva, MRFilm/ORF |
| 2009 | DER KNOCHENMANN - feature, 121 min., director: Wolfgang Murnberger, produced by: Dor Film |
| 2006 | FALLEN - feature, 88 min., director: Barbara Albert, produced by: coop99 |
| 2006 | SLUMMING - feature, 96 min., director: Michael Glawogger, produced by: Lotus Film, coop99, Abraxas, Dschoint Ventschr |

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BIOGRAPHY

DOMINIK WARTA

born 1969 in Vienna. Studies acting at Volkstheater-Schauspielschule. During his studies first roles at Volkstheater. Following a guest season at the Theater der Jugend first ensemble position in Heidelberg. Member of the ensemble of Schauspielhaus Graz and 2010/11 at Volkstheater Wien. Freelance actor since 2011, among others at Schauspielhaus Graz, Volkstheater Wien, Stadtheater Klagenfurt und Landestheater Niederösterreich.



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SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2018 L'ANIMALE - feature, 96 min., director: Katharina Mueckstein, produced by: NGF Geyrhalterfilm/ La Banda Film
- 2017 HARRI PINTER DRECKSAU - feature, 90 min., director: Andreas Schmied, produced by: Klaus Graf
- 2017 TATORT: SCHOCK - director: Rupert Henning, ARD/ORF/SRF
- 2016 ACHTERBAHN - director: Wolfgang Murnberger, ORF
- 2015 SCHNELL ERMITTELT - director: Andreas Kopriva, MR Film/ORF
- 2015 SOKO KITZBÜHEL - director: Gerald Liegel, ORF/ZDF
- 2014 LANDKRIMI: WENN DU WÜSSTEST WIE SCHÖN - director: Andreas Prochaska, ORF
- PLANET OTTAKRING - feature, 90 min., director: Michi Riebl, produced by: Prisma Film
- SUPERWELT - feature, 120 min., director: Karl Markovics, produced by: epo-film
- ALTES GELD - director: David Schalko, ORF/Superfilm
- COP STORIES - director: Michi Riebl/Christopher Schier, ORF

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JACK HOFER

born 1998 in Vienna.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2018 L'ANIMALE – feature, 96 min., director: Katharina Mueckstein, produced by: NGF Geyrhalterfilm/La Banda Film
- 2016 STILLE RESERVEN – feature, 96 min., director: Valentin Hitz, produced by: Freibeuter Filmproduktion
- 2015 EINER VON UNS – feature, 88 min., director: Stephan Richter, produced by: Golden Girls Filmproduktion



JULIA FRANZ RICHTER

born 1991 in Vienna Neustadt, graduated in acting in Graz in 2016. Screen debut as protagonist of an Austrian Tatort, stage debut with “Medea”, Volkstheater München. Protagonist of the eight episodes of the TV series “Trakehnerblut” in 2017.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2018 L'ANIMALE – feature, 96 min., director: Katharina Mueckstein, produced by: NGF Geyrhalterfilm/La Banda Film
- 2017 TATORT: WEHRLOS – director: Christopher Schier, ARD/ORF/SRF
- 2017 TRAKEHNERBLUT – director: Andreas Herzog/Christopher Schier, ServusTV



STEFAN POHL

born 1981 in Graz. Studied acting at Filmschule Vienna, 2001–2004.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2018 L'ANIMALE – feature, 96 min., director: Katharina Mueckstein, produced by: NGF Geyrhalterfilm/La Banda Film
- 2017 DIE HÖLLE – INFERNO – feature, 100 min., director: Stefan Ruzowitzky, produced by: Helmut Grasser, Thomas P. Friedl
- 2017 MAXIMILIAN – DAS SPIEL VON MACHT UND LIEBE – director: Andreas Prochaska, ORF/ZDF
- 2017 TATORT: VIRUS – director: Barbara Eder, ARD/ORF/SRF
- 2016 SOKO DONAU – ORF/ZDF
- since 2015 DIE TOTEN VOM BODENSEE – ORF/ZDF
- 2015 SOKO KITZBÜHEL – ORF/ZDF
- 2014 DIE ROSENHEIM-COPS: DER TOTE KOMMT IM FLUG – ZDF

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L'ANIMALE BY FRANCO BATTIATO

Vivere non è difficile potendo poi rinascere
cambierei molte cose un po' di leggerezza e di stupidità.
Fingere tu riesci a fingere quando ti trovi accanto a me
mi dai sempre ragione e avrei voglia di dirti
ch'è meglio se sto solo...

Ma l'animale che mi porto dentro
non mi fa vivere felice mai
si prende tutto anche il caffè
mi rende schiavo delle mie passioni
e non si arrende mai e non sa attendere
e l'animale che mi porto dentro vuole te.

Dentro me segni di fuoco è l'acqua che li spegne
se vuoi farli bruciare tu lasciali nell'aria
oppure sulla terra.

Ma l'animale che mi porto dentro
non mi fa vivere felice mai
si prende tutto anche il caffè
mi rende schiavo delle mie passioni
e non si arrende mai e non sa attendere
e l'animale che mi porto dentro vuole te...

source: www.songtexte.com

Living is not so difficult if one could then be reborn
I'd change so much, a bit of lightness and of stupidity.
Fake, you fake it when you find yourself next to me.
You always tell me I am right, and I would want to tell
you that it would be better if I was alone...

But the animal that I carry inside
Never lets me live happily.
It takes everything, even my coffee.
It enslaves me to my passions
And it never gives up and doesn't know to wait
And the animal that I carry inside wants you.

Inside of me, signs of fire and the water to douse it
If you want to make it burn, leave it in the air
or else on the earth.

But the animal I carry inside
Never lets me live happily.
It takes everything, even my coffee.
It enslaves me to my passions
And it never gives up and doesn't know to wait
And the animal inside me wants you...

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WHAT DO WE WANT TO BE, ANIMAL OR HUMAN?

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN KARIN SCHIEFER AND KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN

In the first take of L'ANIMALE, two motocross riders, armored in full protective gear, circle one another, but especially themselves. We hear the roaring of the engines, the dizziness, the whirl, the power they have to master, the fragile balance, their self-involvement. Is this beginning a visual metaphor that represents everything to do with the specific age of the adolescents at the center of your film?

KATHARINA MUECKSTEIN: The subject of motocross riders appealed to me because it contains something very powerful. The armored figures are a good image for the lack of permeability and the hard, almost impenetrable surfaces we carry around with us. It is also simply a metaphor for masculinity and coolness, also very important topics in my film. My intention with this first sequence was not so much to put the adolescents center stage. Rather, I wanted to let the film begin with something full of movement and action. In this project, I really wanted to use all the possibilities the budget allowed, and the motorbike scenes are part of that.

Your film tells about being young in the countryside, not in an urban environment. What led you to situate your story in the country?

I am interested in the interface between city and country, the suburban sprawl that is also the interface between Nature and Civilization. It is a great setting for themes such as the romanticizing of the Natural, the mystification of Nature as opposed to Civilization and Progress. We live in a time of constant negotiations as to in which direction we should orient ourselves: do we hark back to a romanticized state of nature or do we transcend the fear of the unknown, forge ahead and look for progress? This is one of the topics of L'ANIMALE that imbues all levels of the film, story, location and tonality.

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Did this zone between city and country also appeal to you as an area, in which traditional and open, contemporary interpretations of gender roles come into conflict?

Since my youth, I have been preoccupied with feminist and queer philosophy, and I find it very irritating that we make all sorts of speculative assumptions about the “naturalness” of gender relations, depending on our discursive aims. We want to have it both ways: see ourselves as sensitive, civilized beings, but on the other hand we invoke nature and natural drives whenever we feel like it. What do we want to be, animal or human? And what aspects of each do we carry within us? I was intrigued by combining these two contrasting ways of self-perception because I believe that both belong to being fully human. We need contact with our intuition, connection to some kind of naturalness, to emotion as well as the will to shape things, i.e., an emancipation from natural drive and incorruptible reason.

We meet your protagonist Mati with a strange haircut, in a dress that neither fits nor flatters her. It is clear from the beginning that she is someone not comfortable in her own skin. You have written another leading role for your protagonist in “Talea”, Sophie Stockinger. Why did you want to work with her again? How did this character take shape?

After “Talea“, I absolutely wanted to make another film with Sophie Stockinger before she was fully adult. I adapted my entire work process to this, knowing how long it takes to realize a feature film. There was not a lot of time. Sophie was 14 when we shot “Talea“, 18 when we shot L'ANIMALE. With “Talea“, I had experienced what can develop when the two of us work together. I was deeply impressed that a young actress without any classical training could have such technique, grasp of characters and scenic understanding. I didn't want to miss out on that. In L'ANIMALE I also wanted to take Sophie further and write a role for her that is more distant from who she is.

We approached the character of Mati both through numerous conversations and through body work. In detail, this consisted in a fight training and group rehearsals with boys in which she trained her “male” behavior. I like finding the path into a character together with the actors through their bodies. While it is a precondition to intellectually grasp one's role, it is a totally different matter to fully internalize that in one's being. To me as a director, the way through the body seems most logical. Sophie is very good at that, but even she had a few hurdles to take for this role.

Mati definitely rejects girls her age but still wants to belong and has found a place, but not necessarily her place, in the boys' motocross gang. She asserts herself by mastering her bike but still is not immune to the macho attitudes of the boys who extend their protection to her only as long as she is a potential sexual subject. Gender relations are extremely tough for this generation. Is this based on your observations in the research for the film?

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I see that slightly differently: Mati is immune from the macho attitudes as long as she pretends to be one of the men. As soon as she becomes an object, she is subjected to the same intimidation as all other girls. I wrote these scenes from the viewpoint I had on young men my age when I grew up. Together with Rita Waszilovics, we auditioned many boys and girls. And when we told the boys that we didn't have rules of polite conduct and that they should behave as uninhibitedly as possible, there might have been some initial shame, but once the breaks were off, no one had to think twice. Every one of them knew how disparagingly men talk about women. We may live in a time where gender relations are openly negotiated, and political correctness might hide some things, but I would claim that everyday practices lag far behind the discourse.

L'ANIMALE is among other things a film about masculinity and about the question what it means for an adolescent girl to realize on one hand, that there is this male world of power, privileges and the freedom to misbehave and on the other hand having to find out that women do not have these same liberties in our society.

I think that outside of the progressive, urban bubble it is still very difficult for women or girls if they don't necessarily want to join the game of being hunted and letting yourself be caught. But L'ANIMALE also shows that those who enjoy traditional male privileges are only apparently free and should take the blame for what they do to others. Mati is guilty when she joins her friends' harassment of other girls. She acts as if it doesn't matter that she is a girl herself, and in the end, she is not able to balance this precarious position for very long.

She experiences for the first time the dilemma of emancipation that to decide in favor of someone also means to decide against someone else.

The characters in L'ANIMALE seem self-determined at first glance but are really stuck in a tight social straight-jacket. In order to be free, they would have to give up their idea that everything is harmonious, that one can please everybody, that everything can always be safe and calculable. I am driven by a desire for society as such makes a step towards growing up and autonomy. That means to distance oneself as an individual from childish wishes for security and being accepted by others and deal more critically as a community with questions of authority and power.

The aim is to move ahead, towards a combination of reason and emotion. My characters exemplify that this is tied up with great anxiety caused by leaving safe positions, but that we can dare to do so all the same. This is where the personal and the political connect: there are things everybody can learn for herself or himself, and there are things that we should learn as a society to develop visions for the future.

To be different in the country can have grave consequences. In her German lesson, Mati calls overcoming fear the central doorway to freedom. Isn't it the fear of stagnation, of making the wrong life choices, of drastic changes that besiege Mati in the phase of her life immediately prior to graduation?

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That is certainly true for Mati. But the story of her parents is central, too. They also feel that they cannot stay forever where they are now. This realization frightens them enormously. They may have a vague idea what a liberated self would look like. How to reach this is more difficult. That is why I am so interested in characters torn between want and ought. Who can project enormous self-confidence externally but tremble inside because they know they will have to leave their position. Parents exemplify what we could become. Willing to suffer a lot beneath the surface to keep in control of appearances, even though this hurts us. But they also are loveable and show us that you cannot always do the right thing in life.

The story of the parents in L'ANIMALE tells us what suffering it causes to learn late in life that one has deceived oneself for too long, that one wasn't truthful or denied oneself something. But also that it is never too late to take a stand for oneself and find a more authentic existence.

Franco Battiato's song "L'ANIMALE" has a significant role, not only in the course of the story. What did this Italian song add to the development of your material? Why did you have the protagonists sing in the moment of their greatest solitude? What is caused by this moment of singing?

Aa I started to work on the script, I happened to hear the song by Franco Battiato, a piece I already knew. Suddenly it became clear to me that any of my characters could sing this song because it is about the central theme of the film. Battiato sings of the animal inside but doesn't describe it as driven by instinct, but rather as something completely authentic that cannot dissimulate. He also looks at this animal ironically because it always wants something that he doesn't want or shouldn't want. At the same time, he knows the animal will always keep the upper hand.

I like the thought that we can never hold back or hide what authentically happens inside of us, try as we might to mobilize all our strength and tighten our social straight-jackets. It will always find a way to the outside and claim its place. In my artistic work I always search for something between the lines, that open spaces for thinking and feeling. Music is one of the means for this.

Since I don't want to use music manipulatively, I preferred to use it directly. The moment when all characters start to think is one that I would like to see more often in the cinema. It's meant to be a moment to just let go.

Buildings, houses and constructions in themselves with their recesses, thresholds and back doors, open, half-lit and dark zones, perfectly arranged and unfinished interiors function as signifiers in all your interior scenes. This coherence between location and scene is especially evident in L'ANIMALE. What is it that is so important to you about this?

Both as a filmmaker and as a moviegoer I always long for films in which time and place are not immediately clear, which allows you to find your way into a narrative space that is suspended above the things you see. That is the effect I tried to realize together with my cameraman Michael Schindegger and my set designer Katharina Haring. For example, there is not a single cell phone in the entire film, the houses are in the middle of the forest, many things are left out, such as the way to school and its surroundings. Darkness plays a key role, as hiding place, as a place of fear, as a projection space. Again and again, there is movement from ill-defined, psychoanalytically meaningful non-spaces to concrete spaces. There is always the attempt to connect interior and exterior, the concrete and the vague.

L'ANIMALE

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The outside in your imagery is very much dominated by verdant nature. We can experience it as summery and pleasant, as uncanny and as protective. The motocross track, however, is a mineral world of gravel and stone, free from vegetation. Another impressive location is the parking lot with the screen of an abandoned drive-in movie theater. How did you choose your external locations?

We chose the quarry and the drive-in theater for Mati and the boys because I wanted to give everything a touch of a Western. I wanted to show how strong you can feel on the strength of acting cool, the conviction that the world belongs to you and that you are entitled to determine the lives of others. When you are in permanent competition with others, measure yourself against them and derives enormous confidence from defeating them. As an adolescent, I envied men enormously for acting within such a simple system of always being buddies and competitors at the same time.

I wanted to make a film in which I could play with male themes, and a fitting physical environment was part of that. The quarry is like the desert in a Western. The gang has specific spaces that are like an arena to show off their glory. Also, while the quarry required an insane amount of logistics it also was incredibly fun to zip around all day on quads and film motocross riders, both male and female.

There are two valves the young adults use to release their energy, their pent-up hormones and their desire for freedom, motocross and dancing. The latter is their way of being themselves, of forging connections with others that would be impossible without the dancing. How did you develop these scenes, how did you stage and choreograph them?

When I was writing, the dancing was a very useful means to set my characters free to show what happens inside of them. For the scenes in the disco, we spent a lot of thought on what music they would listen to, how they would dance to it. It was fun to develop these scenes and the somewhat awkward style of the guys. When Mati and Carla dance, we tried to build up a contrast and show how dancing can also be something that connects. It is sometimes easier to move together than to talk together. There wasn't any real choreography in most of the dance scenes, but we did rehearse the dancing ahead of time to have an idea of who could let go to what extent. I only choreographed the transitions of scripted action and dancing.

You have worked with many youths; how did you manage the casting and preparations?

For both Carla and the guys, I auditioned a vast number of teenagers. My casting agent Rita Waszilovisc, who had casted Jack Hofer, Simon Morzé and Dominik Singer in Stephan Richter's "Einer von uns" recommended the three of them to me. From the first time we rehearsed, it was clear that that was an optimal constellation. From their prior shoot, they were already a tightly knit group, while Sophie came in new. That mirrored very well what happens in the story.

For Carla, I was looking for an actress who was slightly older than Mati. I met several young actresses for the role. Julia Richter convinced me because of a certain inherent coolness. I wanted her character to show how you can be a self-determined girl without having to dissemble. This strength of not caring about pleasing everybody is something that radiated from Julia from the beginning.

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Literature intrudes again and again through the various quotes in the German lessons. To what extent is literature an inspiration for your work? How important is a teacher figure at this life-stage?

I was always conflicted about school. It was both a prison and a window to the world. I wanted to show school as a place where a society is formed. A place where a handful of people try to transmit values and big thoughts. Literature certainly opened up many things for myself. Several times in the film, we hear a quote from Goethe's poem „Blissful yearning“. One of its verses goes „And while thou spurnest at the best / Whose word is „Die and be new-born! „ / Thou bidest but a cloudy guest / Upon an earth that knows not morn.“ When I was writing, I had associations of costume dramas, of 19th century stories in which people suffer so much from the social straight-jackets and fight with their inner revolt.

What wins in life? Fear or passion? A glance at the generation of the parents leaves many open questions. We will not know for either Mati nor her father whether they will be drawn to one sex only, and if so, to which one. It also remains uncertain how courageously Mati will address her future. Many things remain suspended. Did you also try to narrate this state of limbo?

While I was working on the script, I talked often with Michael Kitzberger, Wolfgang Widerhofer and Libertad Hackl about a possible ending for L'ANIMALE. I always returned to the same point: considering humanistic emancipation, but also today's gender discussion, it would have been romanticizing to narrate a final emancipation. But since freeing oneself is something I think all human beings are capable of, and something I wish they will achieve, I would hope people leave the film encouraged to do just that. Emancipation is possible.

All characters in the film realize in the end that whoever emancipates themselves, goes against conventions and doesn't always play along will have to reckon with enmity and possibly aggression. That's where we stand as a society. I couldn't bring myself to write a happy ending, but neither did I want to end on a fatalistic note, and so it was clear that the film would have to be open-ended.

Interview: Karin Schiefer, Austrian Film Commission, November 2017

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PRODUCTION COMPANIES

NGF – NIKOLAUS GEYRHALTER FILM

Founded by Nikolaus Geyrhalter in 1994, and adding Markus Glaser, Michael Kitzberger and Wolfgang Widerhofer as shareholders in 2003, NGF produces documentary and fiction features and series for cinema and TV.

Examples of the roughly 60 cinema and TV features in its documentary portfolio include PRIPYAT, ÜBER DIE GRENZE, UNSER TÄGLICH BROT, ABENDLAND, FOOD DESIGN. They have won numerous awards and have been shown all over the world.

In 2010, NGF produced its first fiction feature: DER RÄUBER by Benjamin Heisenberg had its world premiere in competition at the 60. Berlinale.

In 2011 the second fiction feature production, Markus Schleinzer's debut MICHAEL, was selected for the Competition of the Festival de Cannes.

The first TV documentary series was realized in 2008 with GOISERN GOES EAST. Since 2010, NGF has produced several seasons of the series REISECKERS REISEN.

NGF's most recent documentary successes include the European Film Award for MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE by Marc Bauder, the premiere of ÜBER DIE JAHRE, a 10-year longitudinal project by Nikolaus Geyrhalter, in Berlinale Forum 2015 and THE VISIT by Michael Madsen in Competition at the Sundance Film Festival 2015.

In 2016, Nikolaus Geyrhalter's epic film HOMO SAPIENS was presented in Berlinale Forum. Werner Boote's ALLES UNTER KONTROLLE and DAS LEBEN IST KEINE GENERALPROBE by Nicole Scherg were released theatrically to public acclaim. Remake right for DER RÄUBER were optioned by FilmNation Entertainment (to be directed by J.C. Chandor).

In 2017, the historical fiction feature LICHT by Barbara Albert was shown in Competition of the A-Festivals in Toronto and San Sebastian and was sold world-wide.

In 2018, the fiction feature L'ANIMALE by Katharina Mueckstein (produced in cooperation with La Banda-Film) has its world premiere in Berlinale Panorama Special.

WWW.GEYRHALTERFILM.COM

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PRODUCTION COMPANIES

LA BANDA FILM

Founded in 2010, La Banda Film is a work collective and film production company. In varying constellations, La Banda conceptualizes, develops and produces documentaries and fiction features. La Banda are Flavio Marchetti, Katharina Mueckstein, Michael Schindegger and Natalie Schwager.

- 2018 L' ANIMALE – fiction feature, 93 min., directed by Katharina Mueckstein**
Produced by La Banda Film in co-production with NGF Geyrhalterfilm
FESTIVAL PARTICIPATIONS: Berlinale Panorama Special
- 2017 TIERE UND ANDERE MENSCHEN – documentary feature, 88 min., directed by Flavio Marchetti**
Produced by La Banda Film
AWARDS: 3Sat Documentary Award Duisburger Filmwoche 2017
- 2016 HOLZ ERDE FLEISCH – documentary feature, 72 min., directed by Sigmund Steiner**
Produced by La Banda Film
AWARDS: Diagonale 2016/Großer Diagonale Documentary Award, Vienna Film Award 2016, Austrian Film Award 2016 / Best Documentary, DOK.Fest Munich / Award for Best German-language Documentary
- 2013 TALEA – fiction feature, 75 min., directed by Katharina Mueckstein**
Produced by La Banda Film
AWARDS: Preis der saarländischen Ministerpräsidentin, Max Ophüls Award 2013

WWW.LABANDAFILM.AT

WWW.LANIMALE.COM

L'ANIMALE

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PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

WHO DO WE THINK WE ARE – AND WHO COULD WE BECOME?

L'ANIMALE locates the timeless question of the identity of a person within a time of change in the lives of its protagonists.

Mati is just about to graduate and faces the possibilities of college, moving away, a new beginning, but most of all the question of her role in society and in her relationships. Her parents are in the throes of a second puberty, their midlife crisis, with its possibility of forking paths and the potential loss of the self-confidence they have constructed over the years – they are only apparently secure.

Katharina Mueckstein perceives social preoccupations as a subtle seismograph. In times in which our future is unclear, without visions, in the times of neoliberalism and the receding role of politics, a new definition of the meaning of life becomes elementary.

What is the price we pay for the “safety” of our lives? Do we continue to live our lives as we always have? Where do we redirect our efforts? And what kind of future do we want for our children? Does society remain in the cocoon of vague fears and a new Biedermeier or does it grow up and faces life, in all its vagaries and beauty? L'ANIMALE is a film against the mania for security and against fear, and for freedom and its consequences.

In passing, L'ANIMALE also creates images of youth culture in the country, loneliness, suppressed sexuality, but also the possibility to reposition oneself in a pre-determined social environment. No quarter is given to the protagonists, but the film has eyes and ears for the inner forces they must face. In all its toughness and clarity, its glance is caring. The characters form relationships with the viewers and remain open for manifold options of identification.

The empathy for this openness of characters, their ambiguities and their cinematic location in landscapes and spaces was already very impressive in Katharina Mueckstein's debut feature “Talea”. That Sophie Stockinger plays the lead in L'ANIMALE as well is a true delight.