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Tiere Animals

Greg Zglinski

Producer Katrin Renz, Stefan Jäger, Bruno Wagner, Antonin Svoboda, Lukasz Dzieciot. **Production companies** tellfilm (Zürich, Switzerland), Coop99 Filmproduktion (Wien, Austria), Opus Film (Łódź, Poland). **Director** Greg Zglinski. **Screenplay** Jörg Kalt, Greg Zglinski. **Director of photography** Piotr Jaxa. **Editor** Karina Ressler. **Music** Bartosz Chajdecki. **Sound design** Laurent Jespersen. **Sound** Reto Stamm. **Production design** Gerald Damovsky.

With Birgit Minichmayr (Anna), Philipp Hochmair (Nick), Mona Petri (Mischa/Andrea/Ice-cream Vendor), Mehdi Nebbou (Tarek), Michael Ostrowski (Harald).

Colour. 95 min. German, French.

Premiere February 13, 2017, Berlinale Forum

World sales Be For Films

Nick and Anna are off to Switzerland for six months. Nick wants to collect recipes of local cuisine, and Anna finally hopes to write a new book. The time away might be good for their relationship too, for Anna knows about Nick's affair with their neighbour Andrea, who threw herself out the window. Mischa will be taking care of the fish and the philodendron in their Viennese apartment while they're gone. On the drive to Switzerland, they collide with a sheep.

As the narrative progresses, the more it undermines certainties and sows doubts. At what point did the plot actually begin? Are the characters really themselves, or merely figments of someone else's imagination? First the timeframes become confused, before spatial boundaries are also suspended. Disconcerting parallels emerge between the Vienna apartment and the Swiss chalet. And doesn't the ice cream seller in the neighbouring town look just like Mischa? Is Anna's jealousy unfounded, or should she listen to the advice of the talking cat? Is Mischa actually Andrea? Will every question be answered by the end? Wait and see, for the mind games that *Tiere* allows to play out between Vienna and the Swiss Alps are most sophisticated.

Anna Hoffmann

The world behind the world

I feel drawn to this story in a magical way. The first time I read the screenplay I had the feeling that I had touched on the secret of life and death. I had the feeling that the world is much bigger than we see and experience it in everyday life. And I had the feeling that this is real. I would like to pass on this feeling to the audience of the film.

It's a game with perspectives. Who is imagining whose existence? Or is he imagining somebody who is in turn imagining something else? Who is true? Who is really there? In whose head is this film happening? And what is the role of the animals? It's the logic of a dream that evades our usual experience of perception.

However, it is above all the story of a man and a woman who try to find a way to each other but have a hard time because they seem not to live in the same reality. Isn't it in fact the case that, when emotions come into play, we lose all feeling for space and time? And in the final analysis, aren't we all alone with our emotions? This story is a mystery, one that only allows us to sense that behind the visible world there is another, invisible, one.

Greg Zglinski

"Love can only be possible if these concepts dissolve"

*Jörg Kalt came up with the idea for **Tiere**. How did you end up directing the film?*

Greg Zglinski: I read Jörg's script in 2006 when I was on the awards committee of the Zurich Film Foundation. All of us on the committee were very keen on the text, and we assured him of funding for the project. When I learned later that Jörg was dead, it was a huge shock. The impression I had of his creative work suggested a person who was much more closely allied to life than death. And I couldn't get his uncompleted film project out of my mind.

Four years ago, the director and producer Stefan Jäger and I decided to make the film – we've known each other for a long time. I had explained to him and his production partner Katrin Renz that the story of **Tiere** made a big impression on me, and that I'd like to film it, so I asked them to find out what had happened to the project. It turned out that Jörg's brother had the screenplay in a drawer of his desk, so apparently it had just been waiting for me.

What was it that appealed to you so much about the idea?

A film is a dream that is perceived and experienced in a very real sense. That's what attracted me to the movies as a kid. The first films I made, even before I went to film school, were more like filmed dreams than fully narrated stories. After film school I became more interested in psychological drama with a strong emphasis on reality, probably influenced by Krzysztof Kieślowski.

With the film **Tiere**, which occupies the space somewhere between reality and dream, I have the feeling that I've returned to my film roots, to a magical and mystical interpretation of the world that surrounds us. The screenplay had a dense atmosphere that reminded me of films by David Lynch, Roman Polanski or Stanley Kubrick. The first time I read it, my heart was pounding by the time I finished it.

You wrote a director's version of the screenplay. What was your aim?

I was determined to retain the original construction, the tone of the story and Jörg's humour. At the same time, I had the feeling that the characters, their conflicts and the links interwoven between them could be deeper and more complex. I let myself be guided here by the experience on my earlier psychological films. The most important things for me were that despite the non-linear narration, the tension should be maintained throughout the whole film, and that the audience should get close to the protagonists.

What were your intentions while directing this film?

From the very start I saw **Tiere** as a universal story about a relationship between a man and a woman who want to be close to each other but find it difficult because they each live in their own concept of reality. So love can only be possible if these concepts dissolve. I wanted to embed this idea in the existing story.

However, I also wanted the audience to discover a world that is considerably bigger than what we are able to perceive with our senses. The accent is on 'discover', because **Tiere** is much more an experience than a classic story that takes the audience by the hand and leads them along.

Were there any distinctive features about pre-production – the casting process, for example – the shooting itself, or the post-production phase?

The whole film was distinctive, from the very beginning, starting with the script, which had been haunting me for so many years. The casting process was distinctive in that I was able to select four of the five main actors – Birgit Minichmayer, Philipp Hochmair, Mehdi Nebou and Michael Ostrowski – very quickly from the first presentation given by the casting agent Lisa Olàh, purely on the basis of demo reels. I was certain right from the start that they would be the ideal cast, which was confirmed when we met up again later, and during the filming itself. With Mona Petri it was the other way around: I changed the character in the screenplay slightly so she could play it.

The members of the crew were distinctive in that their personalities and devotion to the project had a strong influence on the film. Among them was the outstanding set designer Gerald Damovsky, who died just recently; he told me that **Tiere** was one of the most important films of his career.

*Is **Tiere** the first film you have directed in German?*

Yes, though it's actually curious that I haven't done so before. After all, I grew up in the German part of Switzerland, and German is as much my mother tongue as Polish. I made my debut film *Tout un hiver sans feu/One Long Winter without Fire* and the TV film *Le temps d'Anna/Anna's Time* in French, and *Wymyk/Courage* and all the TV series in Polish.

Interview: tellfilm, January 2017



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Greg Zglinski was born in 1968 in Warsaw, Poland. He lived in Switzerland from 1978 until 1992, and from 1988 until 1989, he attended a pantomime and acting school in Zurich. Zglinski has been a bassist, guitarist, singer, and composer for several rock bands. He studied Film Directing at the National Academy for Film, Television and Theatre (PWSFTViT) in Łódź, Poland from 1992 until 1997. Greg Zglinski lives in Warsaw, where he works as a film director and screenwriter.

Films

2001: *On His Resemblance* (50 min.). 2004: *Tout un hiver sans feu/One Long Winter Without Fire* (89 min.). 2007: *Na dobre i na złe/For Good and for Bad Times* (TV series, 3 episodes, 50 min. each). 2008: *Pitbull* (TV series, 4 episodes, 45 min. each). 2009: *Londyńczycy/The Londoners* (TV series, 6 of 13 episodes, 45 min. each). 2011: *Wymyk/Courage* (86 min.). 2012: *Paradoks* (TV series, episodes 1-6, 45 min. each). 2014: *Zbrodnia/The Crime* (TV series, 3 episodes, 45 min. each). 2016: *Le temps d'Anna/Anna's Time* (85 min.). 2017: *Tiere / Animals*.