

The Sparrow in the Chimney

a film by
Ramon Zürcher

cercamon
world sales

Zürcher Film

SHORT SYNOPSIS & PRESS NOTE

Karen lives with her husband Markus and their children in her idyllic childhood home. Karen's sister Jule and her family are visiting for Markus' birthday. The two women could not be more different. Grim reminders of their deceased mother incite Jule's rebellion against her domineering sister. As the house gradually fills with life and a sparrow in the chimney seeks a way out to freedom, Karen becomes increasingly tense – until it all comes to a head and the old is destroyed to make room for the new.



As a follow-up to the multiple award-winning festival hits **THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT** and **THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER**, the Swiss twin brothers Ramon and Silvan Zürcher, in their third film – which comes as the final instalment of the "animal trilogy" – once again tell of human coexistence in a very unique way. At times staggeringly forceful, at others poetically sensitive and humorous and with a brilliant cast, **THE SPARROW IN THE CHIMNEY** plunges into the abysmal cosmos of a family and between hidden desires and secrets, sets alight a fire, blazing and renewing.

LONG SYNOPSIS

KAREN lives with her husband MARKUS and their children in her idyllically located childhood home. For Markus' birthday, Karen's sister JULE, her husband JUREK and their two children come to visit. Jule is her sister's polar opposite: easy-going, lively and a freedom-lover. Ever since she was a child, she has hated this house. Grim reminders of their deceased mother just make her want to rebel even more against her domineering sister. Karen's daughter JOHANNA, who has been rebelling against her mother for a long time, sides with her aunt from the get-go. Going through the height of puberty, she provokes Karen at every chance she gets and is not afraid to flirt uninhibitedly with her uncle Jurek. LEON, a cooking enthusiast, also gradually picks up the courage to stand up to his mother. A front begins to form against Karen, and the house succumbs to a dynamic where the aim is to overthrow the ruler. And then there is the mysterious LIV, who a few months ago, moved into the small house on the edge of the woods and walks Karen's dog every day. She harbours a fiery secret and has a special closeness to Markus. Does she secretly want to take Karen's place, so that she can finally have a family of her own? Or has Karen herself, perhaps desired or even devised this revolution in her family? Has she unconsciously prepared a kind of exorcism to expel the demons of the past and finally be free? As the house becomes increasingly full of life and a sparrow in the chimney seeks its escape to freedom, Karen's tension rises – until everything comes to a head and the old is destroyed to make room for the new.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

In this film, I want to explore the fairy-tale-like transformation of a family's dynamics, condensed over two days. It is the story of an unconventional emancipation, where a woman, Karen, sheds herself of the burden of her past. A burden that like an invisible ulcer has burrowed its way deeper and deeper into the old walls of the house, digging itself into the bodies of the family, hovering above it all for years like a tyrannical demon.

Karen's transformation triggers a dreamy ballet of role-playing and frictions. A space of fluid identities takes shape, in which family and social conventions and the possibility of freedom within a middle-class lifestyle are subversively scrutinised. All this provides the ingredients for a bittersweet, dark family drama – a film, in which moments of hurt happen just as quickly as moments of affection and intimacy.

Ramon Zürcher





Karen **MAREN EGGERT**
Jule **BRITTA HAMMELSTEIN**
Liv **LUISE HEYER**

Markus **ANDREAS DÖHLER**
Jurek **MILIAN ZERZAWY**
Johanna **LEA ZOE VOSS**

Christina **PAULA SCHINDLER**
Leon **ILJA BULTMANN**
Edda **LUANA GRECO**

Written & directed by **RAMON ZÜRCHER** • Produced by **SILVAN ZÜRCHER** • Director of Photography **ALEX HASSKERL** bvk
Production Design **PETER SCHERZ** • Costume Design **LINDA HARPER** • Make-up Artist **NICOLE ZINGG** • Casting **ULRIKE MÜLLER**
Editing **RAMON ZÜRCHER** • Gaffer **PETER DEMMER** • Visual Effects **KASPAR KILCHENMANN & YAN HIRSCHBÜHL** • Color Grading **DIRK MEIER** bvk csi
Sound Recording **BALTHASAR JUCKER** • Sound Design **PETER VON SIEBENTHAL & RAMON ZÜRCHER** • Film Music **BALZ BACHMANN**
Sound Mixing **PETER VON SIEBENTHAL** • Production Manager **BENI LEHMANN** • Assistant Director **JOEL GLATZ** • Unit Manager **ANNA FANZUN**

A **ZÜRCHER FILM** production • in co-production with **SRF Swiss Radio and Television / SRG SSR**

With the support of the **Federal Office of Culture (FOC)**, **SWISSLOS / Kultur Kanton Bern**, **Kulturfonds Suissimage**, **Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (BKM)**, **Migros Kulturprozent**, **FOCAL Stage Pool**, **Burgergemeinden Bern & Aarberg**





INTERVIEW WITH RAMON ZÜRCHER

Following **THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT** (2013) and **THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER** (2021), **THE SPARROW IN THE CHIMNEY** is the concluding part of a trilogy, the „animal trilogy“. What connects these three films? And where did the idea for a trilogy come from?

The idea of a trilogy developed over the course of the scriptwriting process, as similarities in both content and form started to make themselves apparent. The first part, **THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT** revolves around a family that is marked by a passive-aggressive dynamic. The second part, **THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER** through a scenario of a friend leaving a flat share, tells of a shift in a friendship and unfolds a panopticon of different ways of life and relationships. The third part, again revolves around a family dynamic – this complex framework we are born into, which for most of our lives, we do not question. Contrary to **THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT**, where the conflicts simmer below the surface, the fire in **SPARROW** keeps flaring up uncontrollably. Everything is heightened, more direct, louder and raging with anger.

All three films have intimate narratives, marked by a single unit of space and time and bear a resemblance to theatre. This is reinforced by the contrast of a mostly static camera and dynamic staging of the actors. The three films, at their core, are psychograms of female characters, whose lives have become static, cemented and rigid. They are in moments of crisis, where only the lives of others seem to contain momentum. Only in **SPARROW**, does the protagonist Karen find movement.

As their titles convey, the three films are characterised by the presence of animals. From the domestic cat, who had to leave her wilderness behind, to the spider, who is free to weave its web wherever it wants, to the sparrow, who not only hops along the ground, but also explores the skies along its flightpaths. Nevertheless, at the centre of all three films, lies the idea of people living together in communities – mostly families – and their desire for a different, fulfilling and freer life.

How autobiographical is the film?

The film is definitely personal, but not private. Every character has a lot of me in them, but all the specific events and plotlines are fictitious. I think my queer biography was a crucial driving force behind this story. Especially my experience as a teenager, before I came out, having to put on a heteronormative mask, to avoid being hurt, helped shape the narrative. For me, this film is also a plea for freedom, for the creation of a social space, in which everyone can breathe freely, making a healthy togetherness possible. In families. Relationships. In society. Everywhere.

Are there any role models who influenced you in terms of this subject?

From early on, I was fascinated by Ingmar Bergman's films. Especially the way he intertwines psychological processes with body images. I found it interesting how in his films, inner worlds and psychological conditions are portrayed on bodies and how he thereby succeeds in making the invisible, visible. I was fascinated by how the cinematographic reality slowly dissolves, as he impregnates it with the inner lives of his protagonists through nightmarish or expressionistic inserts. I was also influenced by genre films. For example, when Karen's anger evokes bloody scenarios that could have been taken from the horror film **CARRIE**. Another influence is the film **MULHOLLAND DRIVE**. I find it breath-taking, the way in which David Lynch constructs a cosmos, only to – with great precision – deconstruct it again. Almost as if he were to dissolve it in acid, so that the viewer loses all points of reference and the cinematic cosmos threatens to explode from its sheer complexity. **MULHOLLAND DRIVE** is probably one of the most formative film experiences of my life.

The film is characterized by its outstanding cast. How did you go about casting?

It was important to us that the actress playing Karen could convey a sensitivity and warmth that would contrast the character's weight and harshness and thus create an ambivalence. In Maren Eggert we found the perfect fit for the role. In constellation castings it quickly became clear, that Britta Hammelstein would make her perfect sister, especially as she combines humour and depth in a likeable and relaxed way and creates an interesting contrast to Karen's character. Given that I have always wanted to work with Luise Heyer, it was a gift that she accepted the role of Liv and so completed the *trio infernale*. Another key aspect

were the child castings for the roles of Leon and Edda. Much like the contrast between Jule and Karen, we also wanted to find opposing temperaments here. Leon has an introverted nature, Edda is more untamed. Eventually, the different characters came together to form a diverse family portrait, complete with cat, dog and sparrow.

With **THE SPARROW IN THE CHIMNEY** you complete a trilogy. What can we expect next?

After the formal restrictions of the "animal trilogy", I now feel I want to rid myself of the "real-time storytelling" straightjacket and create more free narratives in the cinematographic space, i.e. allow for more shifts in time and space. I am currently working on a film about a couple of adolescents, who want to fall in love. Along the way, they recognise the social injustices inherent to our society with its post-colonial structures and as if by magic, they reconstruct them. And so their utopia finds a firm footing on the ground and no longer just floats around in their heads.

My brother Silvan, on the other hand, is writing a psychodrama in which a doctor's assistant falls for her perfidious superior, opening up an array of psychosexual abysses.







RAMON ZÜRCHER

Screenplay, director, editor



© Iris Janke

Ramon Zürcher (* 1982) is a Swiss screenwriter and film director. From 2002 to 2005, he completes a degree in Visual Arts at the Bern Academy of the Arts (HKB). In 2005, he is awarded the Kiefer Hablitzel Prize for his art videos. Subsequently, from 2006 to 2014, he studies Film Directing at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (DFFB). His first feature film **THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT** premieres at the Berlinale Forum in 2013 and is selected at over 80 festivals (incl. Toronto, Cannes, New Directors/New Films, Mar del Plata), winning numerous awards (incl. CPH:PIX – Main prize, IFF Minsk – Best Debut, IFF Antalya – Film Critics' Prize, Viennale – Audience Jury Award). His second feature film **THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER** also premieres at the Berlinale, where it is awarded the prize for Best Director and the FIPRESCI prize of the section Encounters, followed by awards for Best Screenplay and Best Editing at the IFF Mar del Plata and at the "Preis der Deutschen Filmkritik", the Grand Prix at the New Holland Island IFF and a Bern Film Prize. In the *Cahiers du Cinéma* the film ranks 8th on the 2021 Best of the Year list. **THE SPARROW IN THE CHIMNEY** is his third feature film. He is currently writing the youth drama **THE YOUNG WOMAN WITH THE CROWBAR (WT)**.



FILMOGRAPHY

2003-11	various short and medium-length films
2013	THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT
2021	THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER
2024	THE SPARROW IN THE CHIMNEY
tba.	THE YOUNG WOMAN WITH THE CROWBAR (WT)



SILVAN ZÜRCHER

Producer



© Iris Janke

Zürcher Film

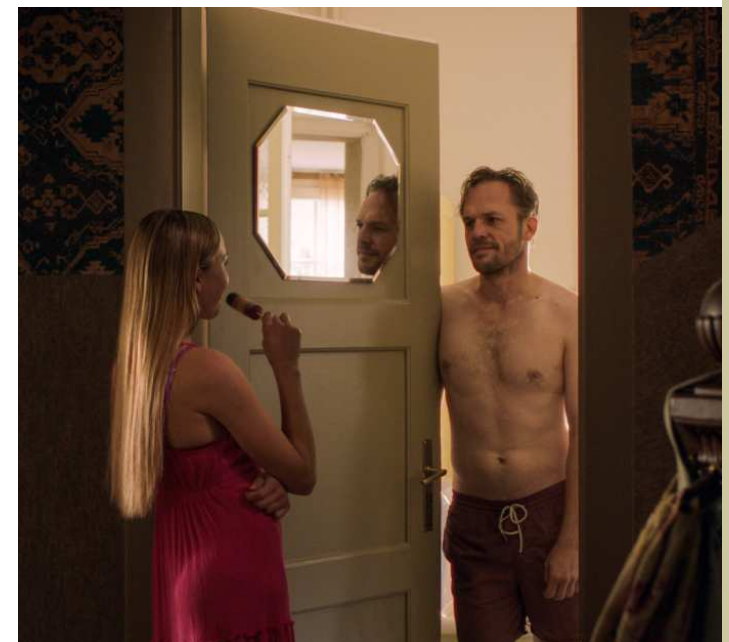
Silvan Zürcher (* 1982) is a Swiss film producer and screenwriter. From 2002 to 2008, he studies philosophy, film and German studies at the Universities of Bern and Zurich. From 2009 to 2014, he studies film production at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin (DFFB). His first feature film **THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT** premieres at the Berlinale Forum in 2013, followed by numerous festivals and awards. In 2017, he founds the production company Zürcher Film, with which he co-produces his follow-up feature film **THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER**, which also premieres at the Berlinale. The film is awarded the prize for Best Director and the FIPRESCI prize of the section Encounters and is invited to participate at many other festivals around the world, receiving numerous awards. **THE SPARROW IN THE CHIMNEY** is his third feature film. He is currently writing the psychodrama **THE SKIN OF MY DESIRE (WT)** and developing the next film, directed by his brother Ramon, **THE YOUNG WOMAN WITH THE CROWBAR (WT)**.

www.zuercher-film.com
info@zuercher-film.com



FILMOGRAPHY

2010-13	various short films
2013	THE STRANGE LITTLE CAT
2021	THE GIRL AND THE SPIDER
2024	THE SPARROW IN THE CHIMNEY
tba.	THE YOUNG WOMAN
	WITH THE CROWBAR (WT)
tba.	THE SKIN OF MY DESIRE (WT)





CV & FILMOGRAPHIES CAST



Maren Eggert (* 1974 in Hamburg) studies acting from 1994 to 1998 at the Otto Falckenberg School of the Performing Arts in Munich. After a guest role in Zurich, she performs at the Schauspielhaus Bochum from 1998 to 2000, before joining the ensemble of the “Thalia Theater” in Hamburg in 2000. Since 2009, she is a permanent member of the ensemble at the “Deutsches Theater” in Berlin. She receives numerous awards for both her work in theatre and film and TV. Most recently in 2021, with both the German Film Award and the Silver Bear of the Berlinale for her leading role in **I'M YOUR MAN** by Maria Schrader. From 2003 to 2010 and in 2015, she appears in the crime series **CRIME SCENE** ("Tatort") as police psychologist Frieda Jung. Eggert has established a close working relationship with director Angela Schanelec. Her last collaboration **I WAS AT HOME, BUT...** receives the Silver Bear for Best Director at the Berlinale. In the summer of 2024, **NOT A WORD** with her as a star conductor will be released in German cinemas.

Filmography:

THE EXPERIMENT (2001, Oliver Hirschbiegel); **MARSEILLE** (2004, Angela Schanelec); **THE VOW** (2007, Dominik Graf); **ORLY** (2010, Angela Schanelec); **ELTERN** (2013, Robert Thalheim); **A DECENT MAN** (2015, Micha Lewinsky); **I WAS AT HOME, BUT...** (2019, Angela Schanelec); **OTILIE VON FABER-CASTELL** (2019, Claudia Garde); **I'M YOUR MAN** (2021, Maria Schrader); **NOT A WORD** (2023, Hanna Slak) u.a.

Actors' Agency: <https://imdahl.com/portfolio/maren-eggert/>
Press agency: <https://lilie2a-pr.de/maren-eggert/>



Britta Hammelstein (* 1981 in Hessen) studies acting from 2002 to 2006 at the Otto Falckenberg School of the Performing Arts in Munich. Her first appearances are in theatre and include the "Residenztheater" and the "Kammerspiele" in Munich, the Maxim Gorki Theatre and the "Volksbühne" in Berlin and the "Thalia Theater" in Hamburg. She can also be seen in numerous cinema and television productions, including the "Goldene Kamera" award-winning television film **POINT BLANK** by Philipp Kadelbach, **DAS ZEUGENHAUS** by Matti Geschonneck and **THE BAADER MEINHOF KOMPLEX** by Uli Edel. In 2021, she is awarded the "Hessischer Film- und Kinopreis" for Best Actress for her performance in the feature film **HEUTE STIRBT HIER KAINER**. More recently, she has stepped in front of the camera for **ICH UND DIE ANDEREN** by David Schalko and **GERMAN GENIUS** by Detlev Buck, among others.

Filmography:

THE BAADER MEINHOF KOMPLEX (2008, Uli Edel); **FREE FALL** (2012, Stephan Lacant); **ZUR HÖLLE MIT DEN ANDEREN** (2016, Stefan Krohmer); **THE CAPTAIN** (2017, Robert Schwentke); **GOOD GIRL GONE BAD** (2018, Petra Lüschoy); **MACK THE KNIFE** (2018, Joachim A. Lang); **MUM CALLS IT QUILTS** (2021, Rainer Kaufmann); **HEUTE STIRBT HIER KAINER** (2021, Maria-Anna Westholzer); **ACHTSAM MORDEN** (2023, Max Zähle, Martina Plura); **PROTECTED MEN** (2024, Irene von Alberti) u.a.

<https://www.agentur-schneider-berlin.de/britta-hammelstein>



Luise Heyer (* 1985 in East-Berlin) studies acting from 2006 to 2010 at the Rostock University of Music and Drama. In 2010, she becomes a member of the ensemble at the "Schauspiel Dortmund", where she is voted best actress of the season in 2012. In 2011, she takes on her first leading film role in **WESTWIND**. In 2019, she is nominated twice for the German Film Award: both for her leading role in **THE MOST BEAUTIFUL COUPLE** and for her supporting role in **ALL ABOUT ME**, for which she also receives the German Film Award. In addition, she is also awarded a Bambi award for both roles. In 2021, she receives the "Deutscher Fernsehkrimipreis" and in 2022, the Grimme Award for her role in **POLIZEIRUF 110: SABINE**.

Filmography:

WESTWIND (2011, Robert Thalheim); **JACK** (2014, Edward Berger); **POLIZEIRUF 110 – KREISE** (2014, Christian Petzold); **TOUGH LOVE** (2015, Rosa von Praunheim); **FADO** (2016, Jonas Rothlaender); **ALL OF A SUDDEN** (2016, Asli Özge); **DETOUR** (2017, Nina Vukovic); **PRETTY FAR FROM OKAY** (2017, Helena Hugnagel); **DARK** (2017-2020 Netflix-Serie; Baran Bo Odar); **THE MOST BEAUTIFUL COUPLE** (2018, Sven Taddicken); **ALL ABOUT ME** (2018, Caroline Link); **COMMITMENT PHOBIA** (2021, Helena Hugnagel); **JGA** (2022, Alireza Golafshan); **BLACK BOX** (2023, Asli Özge) u.a.

<https://fitz-skoglund.de/actresses/luise-heyer/>



Andreas Döhler (* 1974 in Wermsdorf) from 1999 until 2003, he studies at the University of Music and Theatre “Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy” in Leipzig. After 2001, he performs at the “Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar“. From 2003 until 2009, he performs at the “Thalia Theater“ in Hamburg. From 2009 to 2017, he forms part of the ensemble of the “Deutsches Theater Berlin“. Subsequently, he joins the “Berliner Ensemble“ until 2019. In parallel, he takes on roles in a variety of TV series, such as **KINGS OF STONKS** or **SCHNELLER ALS DIE ANGST** and in numerous fiction films. In 2016, he is awarded the German Cinema New Talent Award for his role in **HANDS OF A MOTHER**. In 2023, **ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT** is awarded the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. In 2024, **WINNERS** receives the German Film Award for the best children’s film.

Filmography:

DIE STUNDE DES WOLFES (2011, Matthias Glasner); **IF NOT US, WHO?** (2011, Andres Veiel); **MILLIONEN** (2013, Fabian Möhrke); **HANDS OF A MOTHER** (2016, Florian Eichinger); **ALL GOOD** (2018, Eva Trobisch); **NO ONE IS WITH THE CALVES** (2020, Sabrina Sarabis); **ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT** (2022, Edward Berger); **WINNERS** (2023, Soleen Yusef) u.a.

<https://www.agentur-schneider-berlin.de/andreas-doebler>



Lea Zoe Voss (* 1996 in Bonn) from 2015 to 2016, she is a member of the ensemble of the “Junges Theater Bonn“. From 2018 to 2020, she forms part of the regular cast of the TV series **DRUCK**. In 2021, she and the ensemble are awarded the “Deutscher Schauspielpreis“. That same year, she is nominated for the New Faces Award for Best Young Actress for her role in **LIEBE. JETZT!**

Filmography:

DRUCK (2018-20 TV series, Pola Beck); **TATORT MÜNCHEN – LASS DEN MOND AM HIMMEL STEHN** (2019, Christopher Schier); **LIEBE. JETZT!** (2020, Pola Beck, Tomm Lass); **NIGHT IN PARADISE** (2024 TV series, Matthias Glasner, Bettina Oberli)

www.spiel-kind.com/femaleactors/voss-lea-zoe/





World Sales:

Cercamon, www.cercamon.biz

cercamon
world sales

Sebastien Chesneau (Acquisitions & Sales)

sebastien@cercamon.biz

+971 566 06 38 24 | +33 6 21 71 39 11

Dorian Magagnin (Festivals)

dorian@cercamon.biz

Distribution Switzerland:

Filmcoopi Zürich, www.filmcoopi.ch

info@filmcoopi.ch

Distribution Germany:

Salzgeber, www.salzgeber.de

info@salzgeber.de

Distribution Austria:

Stadtkino Filmverleih, www.stadtkinowien.at

office@stadtkinowien.at

Press International:

Gloria Zerbinati

gloria.zerbinati@gmail.com

+33 7 86 80 02 82

Press Switzerland:

Claire Honegger, Filmcoopi Zürich

hc@filmcoopi.ch

+41 44 448 44 99

Press Germany:

Christian Weber, Salzgeber

presse@salzgeber.de

+49 30 285 290 70

Country & Year: **SWITZERLAND 2024**

Zürcher | Film

