KILLING STELLA
FOLLOWING THE WALL, THE NEW FILM BY JULIAN ROMAN PÖLSLER
BASED ON A NOVEL BY MARLEN HAUSHOFER

A 2017 | 98 min.

PRESS FOLDER

WORLD SALES
Picture Tree International GmbH

CAST

Anna                Martina Gedeck
Richard            Matthias Brandt
Stella             Mala Emde

Wolfgang           Julius Hagg
Anette             Alana Bierleutgeb

CREW

Written & directed by Julian Pölsler
Produced by Dieter Pochlatko, Jakob Pochlatko, Julian Roman Pölsler
Set design Enid Löser
Costume design Ingrid Leibezeder
Camera DoP JRP Artman
Light design Jakob Ballinger
Operator Gerhard Heifl
Editing Bettina Mazzakarini
Make-up Monika Puymann, Marcus Zeynati
Assistant director Nadja Berke
Co-ordinator Claudia Jünger Jonas

Location manager Petra Maier
Production assistant Thomas Konrad
Team Unit Spring
DoP Walter Kinder aac
Operator Sébastian Thaler, Mario Minichmayr, Simon Seliiovsky
Make-up Katharina Erffmann, Brigitte Dedling
Location manager Niko Venturas
Property master / outdoor Peter Suchy

Produced by epo-film produktionges.m.b.h. and JUWEL FILM Production GmbH

Supported by: Austrian Film Institute, ORF Film/Fernseh-Abkommen, Vienna Film Fund, the Province of Lower Austria, the Province of Upper Austria, Cine Art
PRESS NOTE

A family. An affair. A young woman dies. The wife, who is also responsible, callously chronicles the tragedy. In KILLING STELLA Julian Roman Pölsler (THE WALL) adapts another novel by the great Austrian author Marlen Haushofer for the big screen.

With Martina Gedeck – in cinemas from 29 September

STORY LINE

The young and inexperienced Stella unsuspectingly heads towards her own downfall. Richard seduces her, his wife Anna watches the affair with an icy, distant air. Stella becomes the victim of a dysfunctional, middle-class family, which is prepared to go to any lengths to keep up appearances. Anna's writing is like a confession of her own guilt, an oppressive record penned by a lonely heroine, wife and mother.

SYNOPSIS

"I am alone." This is the first sentence of Marlen Haushofer's novel "Wir töten Stella" and at the same time a description of Anna's life. Over the course of two days and two sleepless nights, Anna (Martina Gedeck) drafts the confession of her life. What happened? She agreed to two days and two sleepless nights, Anna got pregnant. Now Anna is the keeper of a well-ordered house, more like a domestic in cashmere clothes or a "house guest", as she puts it. And she adores her son Wolfgang. She isn’t as close to her daughter Annette, because she is too much like her father. Stella, the aloof and shy young woman, upsets the perfectly balanced family structure, turning everything upside down. Anna blames herself for everything: is she guilty? She was the one who gave Stella new clothes and helped her discover her own womanly beauty. And this womanly beauty fell into Richard's lap – Richard, the ruffian, the bon vivant, the seemingly tamed beast, the kind killer. Richard in his flameless spectacles, who usually disappears behind his newspapers at home. He has been unfaithful to Anna before, but they developed a system that worked well and had their own rules, which 19-year-old Stella could not have known about. Suddenly, there were emotions involved, inner turmoil, hidden tears and an abortion.

Even in her downfall, her negligent suicide, Stella is restrained and conside-rate. And after she is dead and Anna has identified her body, there is no scandal. Because order has been restored: "Stella was dead and I felt a great sense of relief." But Anna's story is far from over. More than 50 years after it was written, Julian Roman Pölsler brought Marlen Haushofer's novel "Die Wand/The Wall", which was considered to be "unfilma-

Julian Roman Pölsler elegantly connects KILLING STELLA with THE WALL, creating a cross reference to the Salzkammergut, the region where the hut in THE WALL is located, and to the dog and the farmer's wife, and to that unfathomable, invisible distance felt by the main character. Mar-tina Gedeck's performance in KILLING
Throughout all the years I spent working on THE WALL, I also had Haushofer’s two other novels in mind, namely “Wir töten Stella” and “Die Manserade”. These three novels are very similar in subject matter and style. All three stories are told by a female first-person narrator. As in THE WALL, in KILLING STELLA I also used the original text from the book of mind, shedding light on her inner conflicts and her “walls”. The walls against which this woman — who is telling the story — collides. Anna, played by Martina Gedeck, desperately tries to break out and always comes up against these insurmountable walls. The wall represents a great deal of things in my mind. But the most important thing to me when making a film is to encourage the individual viewer to find their own interpretation of this wall, instead of providing them with my own, ready-made interpretation. We can all sense the walls around us, but we have got used to and accepted them. Walls can also protect us, but each person has to find out for themselves which walls offer protection and which create limitations.

To me, KILLING STELLA is the story of the woman from THE WALL before she goes into the forest and finds herself behind the impassable wall. Here, “the wall” is already present as a subject and metaphor. The novel “Wir töten Stella” was written five years before “Die Wand/The Wall” and has been overshadowed by the latter to this day. It is like a pilot to “Die Wand/The Wall” and I hope that my film helps win recognition for this literary work as the great German-language novel that it is.

As a filmmaker I endeavoured to depict the inner conflicts of my protagonist. Her inner discord and strife, and also her search for truth. Anna has her suspicions that her husband is being unfaithful and she is desperate to find out for sure. This is what makes the film so relevant. We are living in an era dominated by relationship problems. Our main concerns are no longer provision of food or mere survival, but rather the question of how to maintain a healthy relationship. This problem is not just typical of the 1960s when Haushofer wrote the novel. The tale is more relevant today than it ever was.

The author and psychiatrist Paulus Hochgatterer once told me that he saw “Die Wand” as a perfect description of a depression. In “Wir töten Stella”, too, we find a very similar mental condition. But how does Anna get into this state? What does her apathy, her inability to act mean? Her attempts to break out always end in dreams, nightmares or horror visions, which also symbolise her inability to change anything. I was keen to show this aspect in my film and I think it was also the focal point of Haushofer’s novel.

Anna’s condition is of course rooted in the upper-class milieu in which she lives, but this is not the only factor. In this upper-class world she fights her...
battles in a particularly ritual and cold-blooded manner. How does she tackle the problems in her relationship? How much does she repress? How much does she abduct or sublimate? Today, women have far more opportunities to break out or to break through the wall of ignorance and lack of understanding that often surrounds them. But there have been relatively few changes to their financial circumstances. Women still earn less than men and a separation often has more serious consequences for them. Of course, the situation is sometimes the other way around, but mostly it is women who suffer financially or lose their social status, which is an even worse fate in my eyes. The women’s movement and emancipation have changed a lot, but the basic set-up and the central problems remain the same.

Martina Gedeck starred in THE WALL and I was very lucky that she also accepted the lead role in KILLING STELLA. It was very important to me, because she is a link between the two films. She creates an immediate visual connection and highlights the continuation of the plot.

CAST

MARTINA GEDECK – ANNA

Martina Gedeck studied acting at the University of the Arts (Max-Reinhardt-School) in Berlin. Before her graduation, she had already made her debut at Frankfurt Theater am Turm. She was then cast in productions in Hamburg, Basel and Berlin. At the same time, she also embarked on a career as a movie and TV actress.

She received the Bavarian TV award for her powerful performance in HÜLLE-SENGRETL (1995), which was her very first leading role. She went on to win almost all significant German movie and TV awards, including the German Film Award for Best Supporting Actress in Helmut Dietl’s ROSSINI (1997) and in DIE MÖRDERISCHE FRAGEN, WER MIT WEM SCHLIEF/ROSSINI (1997) and in THE WALL. In 2007 Martina Gedeck was awarded the Bavarian TV award for best supporting actress in István Szabó’s SHEPHERD (directed by Niro), in 2012 alongside Jeremy Irons and Helen Mirren in István Szabó’s RICHARD (2003), a TV movie about the last days before Willy Brandt’s resignation as chancellor. He has received numerous awards for his performances: he is a four-time Grimme Award winner, he has also won the German TV Award and the Deutscher Schauspielpreis.

He also narrates audio books and features as an off-screen narrator in the German version of the award-winning documentary OCEANS. He has received the Deutscher Hörbuchpreis (German Audio book Awards) on numerous occasions. In 2010 Brandt made his first appearance as the new Munich police inspector Hanns von Meuffels in the crime series POLIZEIRUF 110 (directed by Dominik Graf). His performance as the inspector won him the Bambi Award in 2011, the Bavarian TV Award for best male actor in 2012 and the German TV Award in 2013.

In September 2016 he published his first book “Raumpatrouille”, a collection of stories about his childhood in the Bonn Republic.
Mala Emde was born in 1996 in Frankfurt am Main. From 2009 to 2012 she attended Studio Tanz, Theater & Musik. It was there that she made her debut as Cinderella in “Cinders” by Janusz Glowacki and also played Tartalia in “Turandot”, based on Friedrich Schiller’s version of the play. She first appeared on camera at the young age of 11. In the years that followed she featured in various films including three episodes of TATORT and various TV movies, such as DER GROSSE TOM/THE GREAT TOM and KATHARINA LUTHER. Her latest appearance on the big screen was in Offline. She also starred in Hans Weingartner’s film 303, which will be premiered soon. Her first lead role was in the docudrama MEINE TOCHTER ANNE FRANK/ MY DAUGHTER, ANNE FRANK which was re-released in 2015. Her performance in this film won her the Bavarian TV award for best newcomer. In 2016 she joined the acting programme at the Hochschule für Schauspieler Kunst Ernst Busch in Berlin. Emde just finished shooting the TV mini-series BRECHT – EINE VORSTELLUNG (directed by Heinrich Breloer) in the role of Paula Banholzer.

**FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTION)**

- 2016 Neben der Spur – Torwunsch (TV movie)
- 2016 Tatort – Borowski und das verlorene Mädchen (TV series)
- 2016 Offline – Das Leben ist kein Bonusslevel (TV movie)
- 2015 Meine Tochter Anne Frank (TV series)
- 2013 Das Paradies in uns (TV movie)
- 2013 Sommer in Rom (TV movie)
- 2011-2013 Krimi.de (TV series)
- 2008 Der große Tom (TV movie)

**BEHIND THE CAMERA**

**JULIAN ROMAN PÖLSLER**

**SCREENWRITER, DIRECTOR & PRODUCER**

Julian Roman Pölsler was born on Kreuzberg mountain above the village of Sankt Lorenzen im Paltental in Styria, Austria. He graduated in directing and has been making films and directing operas since 1990. He also teaches in the Faculty of Informatics at the Vienna University of Technology. He lives and works in Vienna and the Salzkammergut region in Styria.

**FILMOGRAPHY (SELECTION)**

- 2017 Brecht – Eine Vorstellung (TV mini-series)
- 2017 Polterabend (TV movie)
- 2017 Katharina Luther (TV movie)

**THE NOVEL**

The original German version of „Wir töten Stella“ has been published together with another novella by Marlene Haushofer.

**MARLEN HAUSHOFER**

Marlen Haushofer was born in 1920 in Frauenstein, Upper Austria. She studied German philology in Vienna and Graz. She then lived in Steyr with her husband and their two children. “Wir töten Stella” was first published in 1958, “Die Wand/The Wall” was published in 1963, and her last novel “Die Manserauder/The Loft” in 1969. Marlen Haushofer’s achievements were recognised with various awards, including the Grand Austrian State Prize for Literature. She died in 1970 in Vienna.

**WORKS**

- **Novellas**
  - Das fünfte Jahr 1952
  - Die Vergissmeinnichtquelle 1955
  - Wir töten Stella 1958

- **Lebenslänglich** 1966
- **Schreckliche Träne** 1968

- **Children’s books**
  - Bartls Abenteuer – ein Katzenbuch 1964
  - Brav sein ist schwer 1965

- **Novels**
  - Eine Handvoll Leben 1955
  - Die Tapentürtür 1957
  - Die Wand / The Wall 1963

- **Audio plays**
  - Himmel, der nirgendwo endet 1966
  - Die Mansarde / The Loft 1969

- **Books**
  - Das Kreuzworträtsel 1954
  - Die Überlebenden 1958
  - Das Mitternachtsspiel 1984

- **Audio books**
  - Müssen Tiere draußen bleiben? 1967
  - Wohin mit dem Dackel? 1968

- **Collections**
  - Kein Vergnügen 1970
  - List Taschenbuch