## **BIRGIT MINICHMAYR AS THE PAINTER MARIA LASSNIG** SLEEPING



nternationale Filmfestspiele

# WITH A TIGER

## A FILM BY ANJA SALOMONOWITZ

LASU DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY, JO MOLITORIS AAC | LIGHT DOMINIK DANNER | SOUND, HJALTI BAGER-JONATHANSSON AND JOHANNES BAUMANNE | ART DIRECTION, MARTIN REITER WITH ANDRY E DESIGNER TAKJA MAJSNER | MAIR AND MARE-UP, SAM DOPONA AND VERYA KENTINGER | BITING JOHAN SKIENT AGA I SOUND DESIGN. VERYNIKA HLAMATSCH | SOUNDMIX TOBIAS FLEIS | MUSIC BERNKARD FLEIS ISA TILLINGER AND ANDI WINTER | PRODUCTION MANAGER. PHILIPP LUKA GRANDITS | LINE PRODUCER, BRUND MAGNER | RESEARCH. ANNA BAUER | DRAMATURGH, ROLAND ZAG | WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ANJA SALOM PRODUCER: ANTONIN SVOBIOA | PRODUCTION COMPANY, COOPP9 FILMPRODUKTION | DISTRIBUTING COMPANY, STADTKIND FILMVERLEIH













## **SLEEPING** WITH A TIGER

## A FILM BY ANJA SALOMONOWITZ | AT 2024

107 MIN | COLOR

IMAGE: CINEMASCOPE (1:2.39) | SOUND: 5.1

LANGUAGE: GERMAN, ENGLISH, FRENCH

SUBTITLES: ENGLISH

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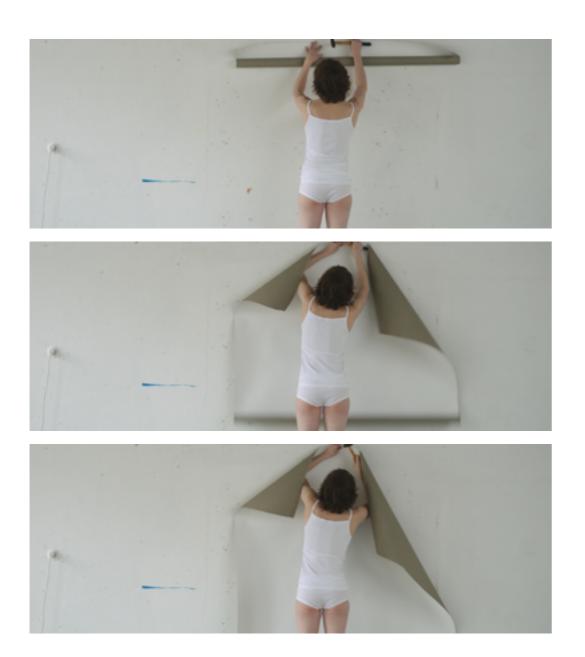






## **Short Synopsis**

SLEEPING WITH A TIGER by Anja Salomonowitz is a poetic portrait of the Austrian painter Maria Lassnig (Birgit Minichmayr.) Gifted child, abandoned daughter, determined woman, lonely artist, explorer of inner worlds, celebrated painter - throughout her life Maria Lassnig searches for her own personal artistic expression. The search is always a struggle, as she collides with the male dominated art world and devotes her entire being to bringing her experience and pain to the canvas. When she finds success and finally becomes a celebrated artist, she'll do that her own way too.



## **About the Film**

SLEEPING WITH A TIGER is a biopic with its own form. The painter Maria Lassnig is embodied by one actress, Birgit Minichmayr, at every age - whether she is 6, 19, 64 or 94 years old. She moves through time as an eternally identical figure.

Birgit Minichmayr always plays Maria Lassnig; an artistic translation of the painter's mental state. It is said of Maria Lassnig that she was ageless: she was already wise as a young girl, and remained young at heart as an old woman. The film also translates the physical act of painting, "seeing and feeling the world from the inside out", into a filmic language, itself attempting to paint an inner portrait of this exceptional artist.

This film is therefore no longer really a biopic. It is an evocative, picturesque vision ofhow memories and feelings are not anchored in time, but able to evoke images at any time.

# 3

## **Note by Maria Teuchmann**

Maria Lassnig, in advanced age, stooped but with a strong voice and vehement demeanor, inspects the set-up of an exhibition and shakes her head. Her paintings have not been hung properly. "My paintings, they have to shine," she says, criticizing the gallery owners. It is Anja Salomonowitz who makes Maria Lassnig's works shine in her film SLEEPING WITH A TIGER.

## "My paintings, they have to shine"



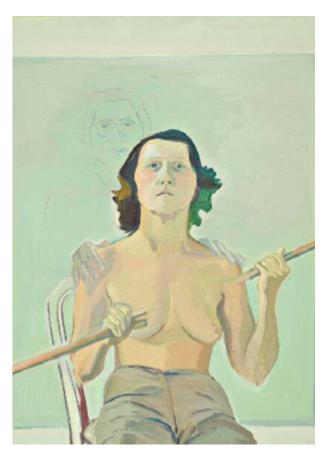
Du oder Ich (2005)



Womanpower (1979)



Der Sprechzwang (1980)



Selbstportrait mit Stab (1971)

## This film is far more than a biographical portrait of Maria Lassnig.

SLEEPING WITH A TIGER also tells the story of the awakening of a woman who was born in Carinthia, southern Austria, in 1919. She grew up with her grandmother and later with her mother, who taught her that a woman can only exist alongside a man. Arnulf Rainer, 10 years her junior, became her partner and even the avant-garde cultivated male dominance in society and art. As a result, the young artist had to put up with numerous humiliations as Rainer's epigone, "which of course really affected my heart," she says.

Anja Salomonowitz has created a film that is far from the typical biopic narrative, of the self-discovery of an artist, but is instead a radically feminist work. Lassnig's oeuvre stands above all for the introspective exploration of her own state of mind and the artistic expression of physical sensations. Anja Salomonowitz not only makes this visionary approach to art visible in SLEEPING WITH A TIGER, but also makes the concept of body awareness, which is essential to Lassnig's work, tangible with every grimace, every contortion or every shrug of the shoulders of the main actress Birgit Minichmayr.

Birgit Minichmayr IS Maria Lassnig. She is the child who snuggles up to her father, she is the young, still shy, undiscovered artist, she is the self-confident but constantly vulnerable woman. She is the headstrong woman who does not serve the male-dominated art market for the sake of money, but demands equal pay. She is the older painter who sees her paintings as her children, children who must not be sent to the orphanage. Minichmayr embodies Lassnig at all stages of her life ageless, timeless, fascinating like her art.

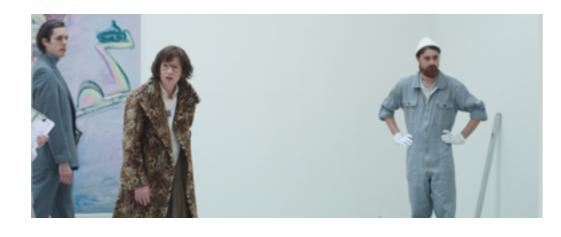
In her directorial concept and screenplay, Anja Salomonowitz sets herself the challenging task of portraying 80 years of a woman's life, without any masks. Minichmayr's ingenious performance, her physical expression, her voice, allow us to easily follow all the leaps through time the film takes. Like a conductor, Anja Salomonowitz orchestrates the actress's timbre through the decades. The script (screenplay: Anja Salomonowitz, dramaturgy: Roland Zag) is densely interwoven and takes us through Maria Lassnig's life and the history of art in the last century.

Colors and motifs from Maria Lassnig's artistic world are also repeatedly reflected in Anja Salomonowitz's film images. SLEEPING WITH A TIGER locates the biographical within the works of art themselves and creates unobtrusive, yet haunting visual quotations. The red motorcycle tells the story of an absent father, the cream-white telephone in the Parisian studio announces the imminent death of a mother.

Formative moments are told through moving images and then find their counterparts in Lassnig's colorful imagery. "Am I afraid to use the color brown because of my past?" she asks herself, after we see the powerful image of the swastika-flag draped Academy of Arts in Vienna, where she completed her studies during these dark times.

Carried by spherical sounds (sound design by Veronika Hlawatsch, music by Bernhard Fleischmann), Lassnig's world of color, images and emotions opens up scene by scene on the cinema screen.





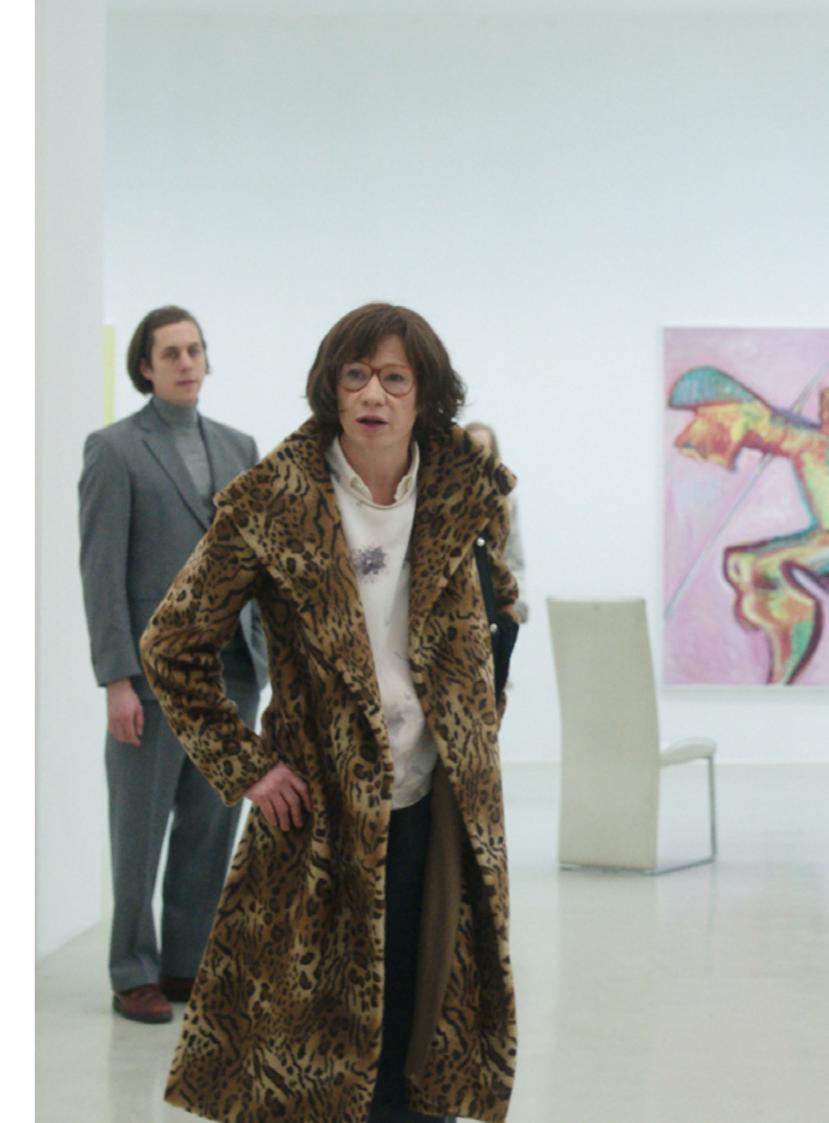


## **A Cinematic Homage**

It was Maria Lassnig who broke new ground as a woman in the visual arts world and on the art market, and it is Anja Salomonowitz who breaks new ground dramaturgically and cinematically to tell the story of a complex woman's life.

(Maria Teuchmann)

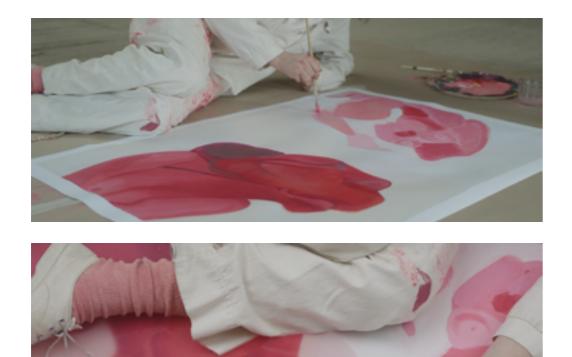
Maria Teuchmann, manages the largest Austrian stage publishing house (Thomas Sessler Verlag) and, in addition to the theater, also works as an agent for material rights, authors and directors.





Selbstportrait im Schnee (2002)

)) Art is contagious 





My idea to make a film about Maria Lassnig began with her paintings, of course. With the colors, because I love the colors in Maria Lassnig's paintings. I stood in front of her paintings in the museum over and over, and was deeply inspired. By the inner expression of longing, the profound feelings, the unfathomability of life that is in her paintings. Sometimes I would go to an exhibition twice, to experience this feeling again. Sometimes three times. Sometimes I have followed her paintings as they travel.

There are colors of pain and colors of agony, spinal cord colors, colors of pressure and colors of fullness, colors of stretching and pressing, colors of caving and bulging, colors of bruising and burning, colors of death and decay, colors of the fear of cancer - these are the colors of reality.

(Excerpt from Maria Lassnig's diary)

## **Director's statement**



Maria Lassnig, Faltblatt zur Ausstellung in der Galerie St. Stephan, Wien 1960 © Maria Lassnig Stiftung / Bildrecht, Wien 2024

I love the idea that this Maria Lassnig went to her studio every day and gave herself over to the stream of consciousness of creativity. She sensed herself. She searched for the equivalent of a feeling inside a color. I love this life lived in art, this unconditional will to create. Her days in the studio. The silence. I also love her questions, her doubts, her self-expression.

#### To Pain a picture into shape.

I also like the story of how Maria Lassnig ended up conquering the male dominated art market, simply by being an artist. When her late success finally came, it was already late for her, and she could no longer find happiness in it. She was always disappointed in principle. But her longing for this success also drove her through her life, just as it drives her through this film. A lonely fighter. I think it's important to film such a feminist success story.

I think about filmmaking while I'm making movies. In this case: revealing the biopic, which can only ever show an excerpt, and always remains an interpretation of the biographer. My answer to this is: become radical. It usually helps, anyway. Radical in approach and radical in execution. And then through this to see a tender movie emerge.

## I never counted the years. I was never young. So I'm not old now.

I like the idea that our soul always remains the same while it meanders through time and events. Let's say that it shapes itself. It rubs off, picks things up, grows through the process. On the inside. The whole movie and all the characters in it always act as if this is all completely normal. I think this allows the humor of this idea to fully unfold. Maria Lassnig was also a person full of humor.

Like in the scene where she dresses extra sloppily when going to visit collectors, in order to appear poorer and thus get higher prices. She was merciless. I love these ambivalent stories her employees or curators told me in the course of my extensive research. I love these stories because they are so human.

I also love the silence into which she has gone. I think of the sounds that you can nevertheless still hear. The words from her diary, as evidence of an inner search for the right art. And for this film: what does it mean in terms of cinematic possibility when the person portrayed looks the same throughout the story, regardless of where they are supposed to stand in reality? Or, in Lassnig's language: how does it feel?

This film uses its own cinematic language to say something about Maria Lassnig without saying it. It develops a life of its own, which grows out of the combination of the idea with all our cinematic 'strategies': the set (Martin Reiter with Andreas Ertl), the lighting (Dominik Danner), the editing (Joana Scrinzi), the sound design (Veronika Hlawatsch), the music (Bernhard Fleischmann). All based on this radical person. I like the way Maria Lassnig created hell on earth for herself - and within it a wealth of brightly shining images.

## I don't need a psychiatrist or a guru. Painting is my therapy.

In this sense - filmmaking is mine. Anja Salomonowitz, January 2024







## **Biographies**

Anja Salomonowitz I Writer and Director Birgit Minichmayr I Maria Lassnig Johanna Orsini I Mother Oskar Haag I Arnulf Rainer Lukas Watzl I Hans Werner Poschauko Antonin Svoboda I Producer

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Maria Lassnig

coop99 : Selected Filmography



© Heribert Corn

#### **Anja Salomonowitz I Writer and Director**

Anja Salomonowitz has developed her own film language, in which documentary film, feature film and thesis film are combied. People's real experiences are condensed through artistic alienation. Her hybrid films all follow a strict concept of color. She is also known for the fact that her films are explicitly political, while expanding the boundaries and possibilities of film in their artistic form. Her films have received international recognition and numerous film awards, and been selected by numerous international film festivals, and are cited in relevant film studies literature.

Anja Salomonowitz studied film in Vienna and Berlin and worked as an assistant to director Ulrich Seidl. She works with students at universities on their films, for example at the Aalto University Helsinki, Department for Film and Television or at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. She is a tutor at the Documentary Academy at the Jihlava International Film Festival, together with the Filipino filmmaker Khavn de La Cruz. She was chairwoman of the Austrian Documentary Film Association and the Austrian Film Directors Association, and from 2014-2017 served on the supervisory board of the Austrian Film Fund. Anja Salomonowitz works as a dramaturge for the Austrian Screenplay Association. She holds master classes on artistic approaches to film.

Anja Salomonowitz lives in Vienna. She is currently working on a film about the Ukrainian activist Inna Shevshenko, the prominent founder of the feminist group FEMEN. The film is an embodiment of FEMEN's visual political art and represents a new pop feminism.

### Links

## >Filmography > Awards & Recognitions



Mit einem Tiger schlafen (1975)





© Reinhard Werner



© katsey

#### **Birgit Minichmayr | Maria Lassnig**

Birgit Minichmayr (born April 3, 1977 in Linz) is an Austrian actress. She completed her training at the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna and made her debut at the Burgtheater in 1999. From 2007-2011 she was a permanent member of the ensemble at the Burgtheater and from 2011-2013 at the Residenztheater in Munich. Until 2019, she worked freelance at major theaters such as Hamburg, Berlin, Munich and Vienna After the birth of her twins, Birgit Minichmayr joined the Burgtheater ensemble again.

Minichmayr presented herself as a "Shooting Star" at the Berlinale in 2001 and received the Acting Award at the 59th Berlinale in 2009 for her role in ALLE ANDEREN (EVERYONE ELSE) by Maren Ade. She has appeared in films such as PERFUME (2005), MERCY (2012) and "THREE DAYS IN QUIBERON" (2018), for which she received the German Film Award. She has also impressed on television in series such as DIE NEUE ZEIT (2019) and DENGLER (2015-2020). Her outstanding acting performance in the film adaptation of SCHACHNOVELLE (CHESS STORY, 2021) earned her a nomination for the German Film Award. In 2022, she appeared in DAS NETZ – EIN WINTERMARCHEN and will be seen in 2024 in Josef Hader's ANDREA LASST SICH SCHEIDEN (ANDREA GETS A DIVORCE) and MIT EINEM TIGER SCHLAFEN (SLEEPING WITH A TIGER) directed by Anja Salomonowitz, among others.

#### Johanna Orsini I Mother

Born 1968 in Klagenfurt, Johann Orsini studied violin at the Vienna Academy of Music and drama at the Mozarteum Salzburg. Theater engagements include the Burgtheater Vienna, Salzburg Festival, Deutsches Theater Göttingen, Volkstheater Vienna, Schauspielhaus Graz, Stadttheater Klagenfurt, Landestheater Linz, Rabenhof, Kosmostheater Vienna, among others. She has also produced several works and that have toured both at home and abroad. For her leading role in the feature film SOLDATE JEANNETTE by Daniel Hoesl, which won the Tiger Award at the IFF Rotterdam in 2013, she was awarded the Diagonale 2013 acting prize.

#### Selected Filmography

"Light" (Barbara Albert) "Self-criticism of a bourgeois dog" (Julian Radlmaier) "To the death of my mother" (Jessica Krummacher) "Sleeping with a tiger" (Anja Salomonowitz) "Veni, Vidi , Vici (Daniel Hösl), Didi (Edoardo Winspeare)

#### TV

King of Stonks/Netflix (Jan Bonny) My town is looking for a murderer (David Schalko) The New Era (Lars Kraume) Landkrimi Osttirol (David Wagner)





© Michelle Rassnitzer



© Antonia Renner

#### **Oskar Haag | Arnulf Rainer**

Oskar Haag, born in 2005, grew up as the son of an artist couple in Klagenfurt, Austria. As a child, he took part in various theater productions as an actor. He also taught himself to play the guitar and piano.

At the age of just 16, he released "Stargazing", his first celebrated single, and has since been described as a shooting star of pop, especially in his home country. All of his subsequent singles were as successful, culminating with his first album "Teenage Lullabies," released in spring 2023. The first sold-out solo tours were to follow and shortly afterwards Haag became the youngest ever winner of the Amadeus Award in the "FM4 Act of the Year" category. At the same time, Haag was given his first small film role in Elisabeth Scharang's film WALD alongside Johannes Krisch. Director Martin Kusej engaged him as a 17-year-old for the production WIE ES AUCH GEFÄLLT for the Burgtheater, in which Haag has appeared as a musician and actor on more than 20 occasions. His performances on the most important theater stage in the German-speaking world immediately earned him two nominations for the "Nestroy", Austria's biggest theater prize.

In his role as the young Arnulf Rainer in the film SLEEPING WITH A TIGER by Anja Salomonowit, alongside Birgit Minichmayr at this year's Berlinale, he is cast for the first time in a major role for the screen.

#### Lukas Watzl I Hans Werner Poschauko

Born in Graz in 1990, Lukas Watzl studied acting at the Max Reinhardt Seminar until 2016, followed by theater engagements at the Volkstheater Vienna, the Burgtheater and the Volksoper Vienna.

His acting work includes collaborations with Sebastian Brauneis (ZAUBERER, 3 FREUNDE 2 FEINDE, DIE VERMIETERIN), Thomas Roth (SCHÄCHTEN), Stefan A. Lukacs (COPS) and Barbara Albert (LICHT), among others.

He is also featured in streaming series for Netflix with Marvin Kren (FREUD, CROOKS) and with Stefan A. Lukacs for Amazon Prime (LUDEN - KÖNIGE DER REEPERBAHN) and for various television productions in Germany and Austria. Lukas Watzl lives in Vienna.



© coop99

#### Antonin Svoboda | Producer

Antonin Svoboda was born in Vienna in 1969. He studied directing at the Vienna Film Academy and graduated with a thesis on the actress Kathrin Cartlidge and her work with Lars von Trier and Mike Leigh. In 1999, he founded the film production company coop99 together with Barbara Albert, Jessica Hausner and Martin Gschlacht. Since 2003, he has directed several feature films and documentaries. In addition to his most recent directorial work NICHT VON SCHLECHTEN ELTERN (cinema documentary, 2018), he developed DER FALL WILHELM REICH with Klaus Maria Brandauer in the leading role in 2012 and the feature film SPIELE LEBEN in 2005. With the trio Christoph Grissemann, Dirk Stermann and Heinz Strunk in the leading roles, he also created the film IMMED NIE AM MEER (2007) and DREI EIER IM GLAS (2015), which was described as "highly comical" by the Austrian newspaper Der Standard.

Filmography as Producer with coop99 2021 Peter's Ride to the Moon, 3D animated film (director: Ali Samadi Ahadi) 2020 Quo Vadis Aida, feature film, 102min. (Director: Jasmila Zbanic) 2020 Me, We, feature film, 118min (Director: David Clay Diaz) 2018 Looking for Oum Kulthum, feature film, 92 min (director: Shirin Neshat) 2017 Tehran Taboo, animated film, 90min. (Director: Ali Soozandeh) 2017 Animals, feature film, 90 min. (Director: Greg Zglinski) 2017 Western, feature film, 121 min. (Director: Valeska Grisebach) 2016 Toni Erdmann, feature film 162 min. (Director: Maren Ade) 2016 Kater, feature film, 90 min. (Director: Händl Klaus) 2014 Amour Fou, feature film, 96 min. (Director: Jessica Hausner) 2013 October November, feature film, 112 min. (Director: Götz Spielmann) 2012 The Wall, feature film, 110 min. (Director: Julian Roman Pölsler) 2009 Lourdes, feature film, 96 min. (Director: Jessica Hausner) 2009 Women without Men, feature film, 99 min. (Director: Shirin Neshat) 2004 Sleeper, TV movie, 90 min. (Director: Benjamin Heisenberg) 2004 Darwin's Nightmare, documentary, 80 min. (Director: Hubert Sauper) 2004 The fat years are over, feature film, 135 min. (Director: Hans Weingartner) 2001 Lovely Rita, feature film, 80 min. (Director: Jessica Hausner)



Selbstportrait als Tier (1963)



## Maria Lassnig

Maria Lassnig (1919-2014) was an exceptional Austrian painter. Born on September 8, 1919 in Kappel am Krappfeld, she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna from 1941. She lived in Paris in the 1960s and in New York in the 1970s. Inspired by abstraction and surrealism, she developed her style of "body-consciousness painting". Her oeuvre, rich in color and dense in content, is considered visionary and is highly esteemed in the art world.

Lassnig spent her life fighting against marginalization in a male-dominated art world. In 1980, she became the first woman in the German-speaking world to be awarded a professorship in painting. In 1988, she was awarded the Grand Austrian State Prize. In 2013, she received the Golden Lion for her life's work. Her works, including "Wild Animals are Endangered", which will be auctioned at Dorotheum in 2021, continue to fetch top prices. The film SLEEPING WITH A TIGER (2024) by Anja Salomonowitz with Birgit Minichmayr in the leading role sheds a new light on Lassnig's life and work.



## coop99 : Selected Filmography

PERSONA NON GRATA	Antonin Svoboda, Feature Film, AUT 2024	KATER	Händl Klaus, Feature F 2015 /Teddy-Award
CLUB ZERO	Jessica Hausner, Feature Film, AUT/UK/GER/DK/QUA 2023, Cannes – In Competition 2023	TONI ERDMANN	Maren Ade, Feature Fil 2016 / FIPRESCI Grand
PETERCHENS MONDFAHRT	Ali Samadi Ahadi, Animation, GER/AUT 2021		Filmpreise, OSCAR Nom
QUO VADIS, AIDA? TUR	Jasmila Žbanić, Feature Film AUT/BIH/ ROU/NED/GER/POL/FRA/NOR/	DIE WAND	Julian Pölsler, Feature Berlinale – Panorama S
	2020 Venedig – In Competition 2020, OSCAR Nominierung	NA PUTU – ZWISCHEN	Jasmila Žbanić, Featur
LITTLE JOE	Jessica Hausner, Feature Film AUT/UK/GER 2019, Cannes – In Competition 2019 / Best Actress - Emily Beecham	UNS DAS PARADIES	Berlinale – Competition
DOLMETSCHER	Martin Šulík, Feature Film, SVK/CZE/AUT 2018 Berlinale Special 2018	LOURDES	Jessica Hausner, Featu Competition 2009 / FIF Award
AUF DER SUCHE NACH OUM KULTHUM	Shirin Neshat, Feature Film, GER/AUT/ITA 2018 Venedig - Giornate degli Autori 2017	WOMEN WITHOUT MEN	Shirin Neshat, Feature Competition 2009 / Sil
TEHERAN TABU	Ali Soozandeh, Feature Film, GER/AUT 2017 Cannes – Semaine de la Critique 2017	MÄRZ	Händl Klaus, AUT 2008 Leopard - Bester Erstl
WESTERN	Valeska Grisebach, Feature Film, GER/AUT/BUL 2017 Cannes – Un certain Regard 2017	IMMER NIE AM MEER	Antonin Svoboda, Featu
TIERE	Greg Zglinski, Feature Film, CHE/AUT/POL 2017 Berlinale Forum 2016	GRBAVICA	Jasmila Žbanić, Featur Competition 2006 / Gol

Film, AUT 2016 Berlinale Panorama Special

Film, GER/AUT 2016 Cannes – Competition nd Prix for the best Film / 5 Europäische ominierung

re Film, AUT/GER 2011 Special 2012 / Preis der ökumenischen Jury

ure Film, BIH/AUT/GER/CRO 2010 ion 2010

ture Film, AUT/FRA 2009 Venedig – IPRESCI Preis / La Navicella Venice Cinema

re Film GER/AUT/FRA 2009 Venedig – Silberner Löwe

08 Locarno Film Festival 2008 / Silberner stlingsfilm

ture Film, AUT/Rotterdam 07

ure Film, AUT/BIH/GER/CRO 2006 Berlinale – Goldener Bär

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Casting: Lisa Oláh Camera: Jo Molitoris AAC Light: Dominik Danner Sound: Hjalti Bager-Jonathansson and Johannes Baumann Art Direction: Martin Reiter with Andreas ErtL Costume Designer: Tanja Hausner Hair and Make-Up: Sam Dopona and Verena Eichtinger Editing: Joana Scrinzi AEA Sound Design: Veronika Hlawatsch Soundmix: Tobias Fleig Music: Bernhard Fleischmann Color: Lisa Tillinger and Andi Winter Production Manager: Philipp Luka Grandits Line Producer: Bruno Wagner Research: Anna Bauer Dramaturgy: Roland Zag Producer: Antonin Svoboda Written and Directed by Anja Salomonowitz Production Company: coop99 Filmproduktion Distributing Company: Stadtkino Filmverleih

## **Credits | Extract**

