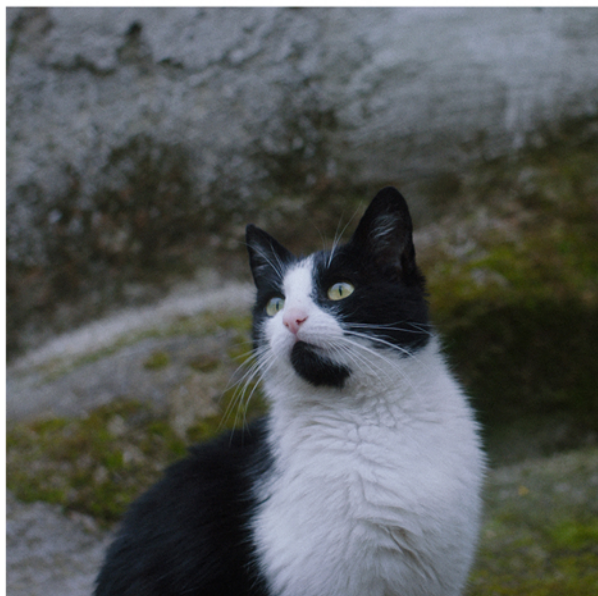


# SILENT OBSERVERS

DIRECTOR: ELIZA PETKOVA

In a remote Bulgarian mountain village, six animals reveal the mysterious world of superstition. A cat is considered a vampire, a donkey is thought to be bewitched, and a dog is seen as a chicken hunter. Through sensitive observation, we witness the dwindling hopes of the village through the eyes of its four-legged inhabitants. Time seems to stand still, yet transience remains the only constant.



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## SYNOPSIS

Matsa, Mila, Kirka, Belushka, Belka, and Gosho are animals through whose eyes we observe life in the Bulgarian mountain village of Pirin. As the elderly residents of Pirin gradually pass away, the animals embody the hopes and fears of the village community.

The cat Matsa leaps over the lifeless body of her owner. From that moment on, the deceased man's wife and the entire village are convinced that his soul has entered the cat. Matsa is declared a revenant. The dog Mila is accused by the neighbour of eating his chickens and must pay a high price for it. The donkey Kirka is surrounded by the myth that he is the bewitched son of his owner, whom she tried to save from prison. Belka is a little lamb destined to gain five kilos by Easter, while the goat Belushka no longer produces milk and is in danger of becoming useless. The horse Gosho is sick and can no longer carry loads. Eventually, he is sold and thus freed from his fate as a workhorse.

In this film, all the animals are real individuals whose personalities we delve into more deeply. Through the eyes of the animals, we encounter a world that is disappearing ever more quickly, where magic sometimes represents the last hope.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

SILENT OBSERVERS is the third and final film of a trilogy dedicated to the Bulgarian mountain village of Pirin. After the feature film ZHALEIKA and the documentary MAYOR, SHEPHERD, WIDOW, DRAGON, I decided to make a film that focuses on the animals in the village.

Since humans and animals coexist in the village of Pirin, the desire to explore life from an animal's perspective was born in a very natural and organic way. The film aspires to change the worldview according to which humans have power over the animal world. Here, the animal is the observer whose gaze evaluates the villagers' actions, not the other way around.

In the gradually fading village, myths and superstitions are often one of the few activities that bring joy to its inhabitants. I found it interesting to immerse myself in the stories in which animal personalities embody the fears and hopes of their owners. Not only are these animals the inseparable companions of their owners, but they often substitute partners, children, and sometimes have superpowers that leave the confines of reality. The arcane, the magical and the winding paths of superstition set the direction of this film, which does not seek the objective truth, but immerses the viewer in a mystical observation without giving answers.

SILENT OBSERVERS aims to follow the silent disappearance of a beautiful place in Bulgaria, whose inhabitants have managed to preserve their belief in miracles.



## ELIZA PETKOVA



In 2016, Eliza Petkova completed her first feature film, ZHALEIKA, which premiered at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival where it was nominated for Best First Feature and was awarded a Special Mention by the international jury of the Generation Section. This was followed by various other festival screenings, as well as international prizes and awards. Eliza was invited to participate in the Berlinale Talents at the 68th Berlin International Film Festival in 2018. In 2020 her second feature film, A FISH SWIMMING UPSIDE DOWN, premiered at the 70th edition of Berlinale. In the same year she was awarded the Wim Wenders Grant. In 2021 she received the Kompagnon-Fellowship Award at the 71st edition of Berlinale and was awarded Best Director at the Tirana International Film Festival. Her documentary MAYOR, SHEPHERD, WIDOW, DRAGON premiered at the Shanghai International Film Festival and celebrated its German premiere at the 43rd edition of the Film Festival Max Ophüls Prize, where it received the Critic's Award.

### FILM INFO

|                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| Genre:              | Docu-fiction      |
| Runtime:            | 96 minutes        |
| Year of completion: | 2024              |
| Country of origin:  | Bulgaria, Germany |
| Language:           | Bulgarian         |



## **SILENT OBSERVERS**

Directed and written by **ELIZA PETKOVA**

Producer **VESELKA KIRYAKOVA**

Co-producers **JASPER PH. MIELKE, KAROLINE HENKEL, ARTO SEBASTIAN, ELIZA PETKOVA, CONSTANZE SCHMITT**

Director of photography **CONSTANZE SCHMITT**

Sound recordist **HANNES MARGET**

Sound designer **HANNES MARGET**

Editors **ELIZA PETKOVA, HANNES MARGET**

Original score **ADAM GOODWIN, ANIL ERASLAN, JUNG-JAE KIM, LUKAS AKINTAYA, SHINGO MASUDA**

Assistant Producer **TSVETELINA YORDANOVA**

Team Assistant, Wood Water Films **ULRICH FUCHS**

Production Manager **STOYAN MIZYULEV**

Production Assistant **SONYA IVANOVA**

Production **RED CARPET**

Co-production **WOOD WATER FILMS, RBB, CINEMANDA**

In collaboration with **ARTE**

Supported by

**BULGARIAN NATIONAL FILM CENTER**

**EURIMAGES**

**WIM WENDERS SCHOLARSHIP OF FILM - UND MEDIENSTIFTUNG**

**NORDRHEIN-WESTFALEN**

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