

# Phoenix from the ashes - The highest form of love

## Documentary film by Sarah Laura Hauenstein

"Phoenix from the Ashes - The Highest Form of Love" portrays a strong female figure and her personal mourning process in a long-term observation.

The focus is on the mother of four, Erika Kunz Gyger, who rises like a phoenix from the ashes after the death of her two severely disabled daughters and thus does not correspond to the social image of an (eternally) grieving and broken mother of deceased children. The core of the story is about a multiple life change triggered by the birth and death of the protagonist's twins. Connected with this are the social constraints and a rebellion against precisely these. The documentary reflects the expectations of our society, the way we deal with impaired people as well as the way we deal with parents of deceased children and caring relatives. Erika's story challenges the audience and aims to create more understanding and empathy for relatives of disabled and impaired people - beyond their death. The film confronts viewers with their own values and ethical stance and encourages them to deal with sensitive taboo subjects in a more open, non-judgemental way.

## Thoughts on the music in the film

The soundscapes are meant to express Erika's feelings on a musical-emotional level. Erika is the master of her feelings while she talks about her life - she can control her emotions. She strikes me as very eloquent and extremely reflective. The music has the task of expressing even more strongly the emotions that resonate with Erika but are not always explicitly visible.

In addition, the sound images are meant to pick up on the narrative of change and the metaphor "phoenix from the ashes". The mood is constantly changing due to drastic events: death, therapy, clinic, relocation, joy of life, relapses, rays of hope, freedom, redemption, new beginnings. Erika's life, or the excerpt from her life that we show in this film, takes place between poles: It is an up and down, a back and forth, a forward and backward and a meandering path with many attempts to face grief and loss. There is no linear path. At some point Erika recalls herself, feels herself again and finds her very own way through the mourning process. She goes into the shallows, but does not sink, but

draws incredible strength precisely from these shallows. This pattern of behaviour is reflected in the phrase "like a phoenix rising from the ashes".

Erika describes this process as follows: "I have a great capacity for suffering. I can endure violent feelings and I go to my limits, let myself fall into the deepest hole without sinking. At that moment, when I reach the bottom, the power shoots into me and I push off and emerge. And then I am here".

On the one hand, the music is supposed to carry the ups and downs and the constant development of Erika, on the other hand, it should also make Tashi and Lhamo more perceptible as people and personalities.



# PHÖNIX AUS DER ASCHE

## DIE HÖCHSTE FORM VON LIEBE

EIN FILM VON SARAH LAURA HAUENSTEIN

Dieser Film erzählt die Geschichte von Erika: Eine Frau und Mutter, die nach jahrelanger Einschränkung durch die Betreuung ihrer schwer beeinträchtigten Töchter in eine tiefe Krise fällt. Nach dem Tod der Zwillinge besinnt sich die Lebenskünstlerin allmählich auf ihre rebellische und freiheitsliebende Persönlichkeit. Sie nimmt ihr Leben wieder selbst in die Hand und trotzt damit den gängigen gesellschaftlichen Normen. Der Film ist ein Appell, mehr auf die innere Stimme zu hören und den Mut aufzubringen, anders zu sein. Darin liegt eine ungeheure Kraft.

Dokumentarfilm, CH, ©2023, 55 Min, CH-D



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