

Press Kit

Zwermen

murmuration

a short film by
Janneke Swinkels & Tim Frijsinger
Spotted bird, Beast Animation & MurMur



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animation

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Logline

In a quiet nursing home, an elderly man grows feathers, loses his voice, and quietly prepares for flight.

Synopsis

Piet, a quiet resident in a nursing home, starts to experience peculiar changes: feathers sprout in his hair, an unfamiliar lightness in his limbs and his words gradually turn into soft chirps and whistles. Though life around him remains unchanged, Piet senses a profound shift within. While his community still embraces him, he feels it may be time to join a new flock.

Director's Statement

With *Zwermen* (Murmuration), we aim to offer an intimate, almost documentary-like glimpse into daily life in a nursing home. The story unfolds at an unhurried pace, in line with the rhythm of life there. Some residents are content, moving along with the flow, while others, like our protagonist Piet, seek their own path and try to maintain their independence.

Over the course of the film, Piet gradually transforms into a bird. This physical change introduces a magical-realist element that can be interpreted in different ways: is he truly transforming, or are his struggles simply signs of age and decline?

For Piet, the change is no cause for concern; just as every other elderly person no longer marvels at wrinkles or grey hair, he accepts it as a natural development. This ambiguity leaves room for the viewer to interpret the story in their own way. We play with stereotypes and audience expectations, inviting reflection and reconsideration.

For us, there is no single explanation for the events in the film. We neither confirm nor deny that Piet turns into a bird, nor do we frame it as a purely psychological phenomenon. Instead, the film presents a series of interconnected moments, each marking Piet's development toward the final scene in the forest. Here, he fully embraces his new existence, joining the other birds in flight. The quiet, open final scene - Piet's empty room with an open window and feathers on the windowsill - suggests a sense of acceptance. To us, it's a positive ending.

We chose stop-motion animation for this film because it allows us to physically grasp the characters and objects, creating a tangible world that viewers can almost step into. Compared to a more stylized, hand-drawn approach, stop-motion fosters a closer connection to the characters and their surroundings. In our view, it also enhances the documentary-like nature of the film.

[Watch the trailer](#)

[Download the stills](#)



Interview with directors Janneke & Tim

Zwermen is a 12-minute stop-motion short film by Janneke Swinkels and Tim Frijsinger. The idea for the film started taking shape around 2015 and it is their first time working in stop-motion. Most of the film was made by the two of them, with help from a small team of collaborators. What began as a personal idea slowly grew into a carefully made, handcrafted film.

What inspired the story behind Zwermen?

In 2013, Janneke made her graduation film at KASK art school in Belgium. It was an animated documentary about her grandfather and his 1950 pilgrimage to Rome. During the making of that film, she spent a lot of time in the nursing home. She felt that the quiet pace of life there was very interesting and inspirational. A few years later, we started writing Zwermen, and that atmosphere became one of the foundations for the film.

How was the experience of working with your life partner on this film?

It's a way of working that developed naturally. We've been collaborating since before we graduated, and doing creative work together has always felt intuitive. We understand each other's strengths and know how to divide responsibilities in a way that works for both of us. Making a film like this takes time and brings a lot of uncertainty, but because we were both fully committed, we could support each other through it. Not everyone understands why you would spend so many years on a short film, but for us, it always made sense.

How did you develop your visual approach to the film?

From the start, we knew we wanted to work with stop motion and puppets. It was the fabrics and textures that drew us in. There is something special about being able to hold a character in your hands. We had seen many puppet films and liked the felt techniques often used, but we also wanted the film to have its own look. Since most of our earlier work was 2D, we asked textile artist Elke Lutgerink to help develop the first puppet. Her input really shaped the visual style. The animation was just as important. We wanted the movement to feel subtle and lifelike. When Mirjam Plettinx animated one of the first scenes we shot, she immediately set the tone and we loved every frame she made. We're very thankful to her, and to Geertrui De Vijlder and Rosanne Janssens, who also brought so much to the animation.

How did Roosbeef get involved in the soundtrack?

We've been fans of Roos Rebergen and her band Roosbeef for years. When we heard her 2023 album Zomer in Nederland, we immediately saw images with it, the music felt very cinematic. After a concert in Maastricht, we asked if she would be interested in composing for the film. She hadn't done a soundtrack before but was excited to try. Together with Sjoerd Bruil, she really lifted the film. Even their first demo added so much emotion. It turned out better than we imagined.

How did working in Holy Motion Studio influence the film?

Working in the studio gave the project a clear rhythm and focus. Having all the tools, puppets, and sets around us made it easier to stay close to the material. We also felt really welcome from the start. Sharing the space with other makers brought a good energy. Even simple things like having lunch together helped create a supportive environment, especially during the more demanding parts of production.

What challenged you most while making this film, and what did you learn from the experience?

The biggest challenge wasn't so much in the production itself, but in everything that came before it. Since we hadn't made a stop-motion film before, it took time to build trust with producers and funders and to secure the financing. That part of the process was long and sometimes made it difficult to keep believing in the project.

Once production began, we took on almost everything ourselves, from designing and building the puppets, sets, and props to planning the lighting, editing, and directing. And all of it was new to us. On top of that, we were raising a young daughter together, so balancing everything wasn't always easy.

Because we were so closely involved in every aspect of the film, it was also hard to let go and accept its imperfections. You always see the things you wish you had done differently. But looking back, we mostly feel grateful. We met a lot of talented people and learned so much from working with them. Letting others into the process was new for us, but it made the film stronger. It became something we couldn't have made on our own.

Director's Bio



Since founding Janneke Filmt in 2009, Janneke Swinkels and Tim Frijsinger have collaborated on a wide range of film-related projects across documentary, animation, and commissioned media. Their work has served clients including Dutch regional broadcaster Omroep LI, Lumière Cinema, Schunck, the Rotterdam and The Hague Philharmonic Orchestras, Viewmaster Projects, and the Province of West Flanders – often as a duo, occasionally independently.

As their animation work grew more prominent, they began releasing these projects under the name MurMur in 2020. Their practice combines strong visual storytelling, handcrafted techniques, and a deeply personal approach rooted in observational detail and emotional nuance.

Selected Work

MIJNDERT (2015)

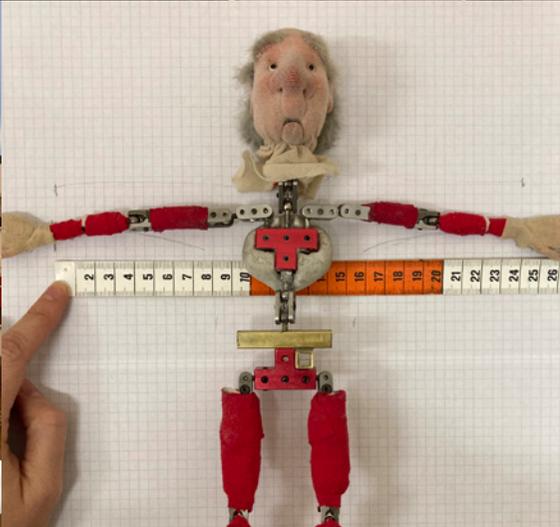
Commissioned in collaboration with CineSud and the M2015 Year of the Mines project, the short animation Mijndert was screened at over 40 international festivals and marked the beginning of their long-term dedication to animated storytelling.

ZONDER VERSNELLING (2013)

This animated graduation documentary is about Janneke's grandfather and his 1950 pilgrimage to Rome. It was broadcast on regional television (LI) and screened at festivals including the Netherlands Film Festival (NFF), DOCartoon (Italy), and Docville (Belgium).

murmuranimation.nl





Credits & Specs



Written & Directed by	Janneke Swinkels Tim Frijsinger	Year of production	2025
		Running time	12 minutes - 30 sec
Production Company	Spotted Bird	First Film	Yes
Co-producers	Beast Animation (BE) MurMur Animation (NL)	Original Music	Yes
Distribution & Sales	Miyu Distribution	Language Version	N/A
		Country of Origin	Netherlands
Animation	Rosanne Janssens Mirjam Plettinx Geertrui De Vijlder	Process	Color
		Main Technique	Stop motion
Director of Photography	Peter Mansfelt	Genre	Drama/comedy
Music	Roos Rebergen Sjoerd Bruil	Theme	Transience
Sound	Corinne Dubien Manu De Boissieu	Target Audiences	Adults and children
Studio Facilities	Holy Motion Animation Studio		

Contact

Producer

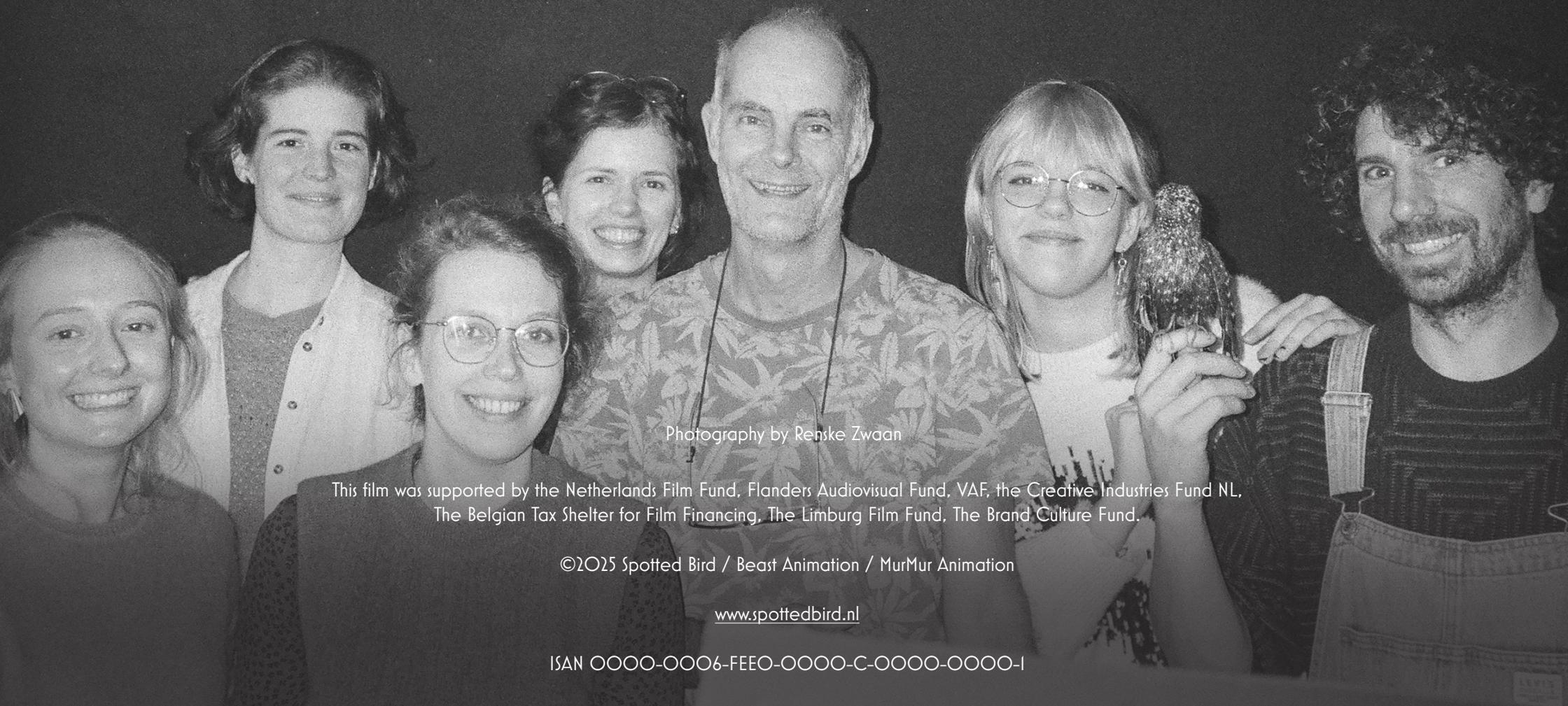
Spotted Bird
Peter Lindhout
peter@spottedbird.nl

Distribution & Sales

Miyu Distribution
Luce Grosjean
luce.grosjean@miyu.fr

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Photography by Renske Zwaan

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