

Franka Potente

Ms. Potente, why did you want to become involved with *Hear the World*?

My mother works at an ear, nose and throat specialist's practice. In other words, I was familiar with the issue from an early age. And as an actress I also know of course how immensely important the sense of hearing is.

Which is neglected?

Yes. I have just been working in Madrid. In the evening I watched flamenco dancing, which first and foremost is a very sensual, visual experience. But I often just sat there and closed my eyes. For hearing is not just hearing a sound, it is more. There is almost something three-dimensional about it. Hearing is quite simply an important sensory perception. You can also look someone in the eye, but the sound makes the music. Hearing helps us differentiate things. In my job, too, it is not just about appearance, but you can say a sentence in a million different ways, making it sound different each time, thus giving each sentence a completely different meaning.

What is more important in acting, articulation or movement, gesticulation?

That comes with the job, it is inseparable. When I film a scene in which I listen to someone – a dialog – it is not only about speaking, but above all listening. Sometimes it really happens that you only properly understand it on the fifth repetition of the take. The sound is also very important, you can say something and convey through sound alone that you do not mean it this or that way at all, or that you really do mean it. I also play with that in my profession.

And your debut as a director is a silent movie of all things. Why is that?

“Der die Tollkirsche ausgräbt” was an experiment. At the moment I allow myself to do exactly what I want to do. Last year, I joined forces with Max Urlacher and also shot a documentary on the underground scene in Tokyo.

You yourself also shun the public eye. Do you not want to be a star at least every now and then, just for the sake of it?

I don't ask myself questions like that. The question is: What is the point of having my photo taken here and saying something or other into a microphone there? I don't know.

Matt Damon and Johnny Depp are good examples of how to deal cleverly with their roles as stars.

Yes, I admire that very much. When I filmed “Blow” with Johnny Depp we went out in the evening. Of course everyone recognized him. But it didn't matter to him. He seemed to just flick a switch and became the star for the rest of the evening. In the taxi back to the hotel he flicked the switch off again.

But you understand why the star Johnny Depp is admired? Of course. Even just standing in line for the toilets with Julia Roberts at a party is a bit unsettling. Once Björk was staying in the room next to me in a hotel, and I knew that only this one wall separated us, and I felt uneasy. You don't want to be so close to an idol, to someone you have a certain image of in your mind. I would not like to meet him as a normal person. And understandably, he doesn't want people to meet him like that either.

So basically you are saying that a real star has to lead a double life?

Exactly. This schizophrenia gives me rather more difficulties.

Is it true that you go to a hairdresser's after every film?

In the past yes. Recently I have filmed a lot with wigs, that helps me. And in fact on one occasion in the evening, the people from the set didn't recognize me.

That can't have been a bad thing for you.

That is how I like it best: I go to work, there I am the film star, and afterwards I simply strip it all away and am myself again.

Christian Seidl, Chief Staff Writer at the German Vanity Fair, conducted the interview.

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