

## PORTRAIT Julianne Moore

We all know that children can be pretty cruel. Hardly anyone who knows that better than Julianne Moore. As a little girl, she was often the target of ridicule: The combination of red hair and freckles seemed so unusual at her school that she practically attracted spitefulness and antagonism. "You look like a giraffe" was probably the most benign schoolyard insult; "Is that dirt on your face?" went a little further. Yet Julianne Moore has dealt with the trauma pretty well and has even written a witty children's book about her experiences. The illustrated book is called *Freckleface Strawberry* and is about a seven-year-old girl who is teased because of her facial characteristics. The book's educational message can be summed up simply as: No-one should be teased because of their appearance; every person is special and lovable. Yet to a certain degree, here too the medium used for the message is the frequently recurring phenomenon of "stars writing children's books". Julianne Moore has admitted that she has always loved books and always wanted to publish one herself. And, with her having become one of the most sought-after, successful, versatile and mysterious actresses in the American movie industry in the last 20 years, what publisher was going to deny her that wish? *Freckleface Strawberry* is now a style icon, the face of major fashion labels and favorite of important directors.

So what was once seen as a flaw has now become a hallmark. Even when she had to dye her hair for a particular role, Julianne Moore once said, all the viewers were adamant after the showing that she had red hair in this movie too. No matter how different the characters she portrays, Julianne Moore is always also herself. That is what defines true stars: they are able to maintain their aura while embodying someone else. Julianne Moore's aura is down to her extraordinary beauty, which conforms to no established clichés; to the fact that it is hard to get close to her, which heightens her attractiveness; to her pale, porous elegance, which evokes a sense of fragility and noblesse; and nervous irritability, which seems less to express weakness and more to make her strength bearable. Yet just listing all these aura-enhancing qualities is not enough. There is much more, which is difficult to put into words, that makes her unique. Perhaps we can only get a bigger picture of this woman if we follow the stories she tells as an actress, even if she only has a supporting role. We automatically focus on her when she graces the screen. The camera loves her, and she loves the camera.

In the 1940s and 1950s, the glorious era of the major Hollywood studios, Julianne Moore would presumably have had an even greater career. She is just the right type. In Todd Haynes' *Far From Heaven* (2002) she plays, opposite Dennis Quaid, the wife of a homosexual man in the chaste 1950s. It is a broken, melancholy role, immersed in soft lighting and set against backdrops we know from films by Nicholas Ray and Douglas Sirk. A movie that does not take an ironic view of the past, but explores its moods. Julianne Moore, who in this role calls to mind Lana Turner or Joan Bennett, not only slips into 1950s costume, but more importantly she embodies the consciousness of that era. The attempt to break out of suburban melancholy, which fails before it has really begun, the impossible love of the black gardener Raymond, the longing – all of this could hardly be portrayed more vividly. The broken nature of characters who strive to keep up appearances perfectly suits Julianne Moore. In *A Single Man* (2009) too, set in the early 1960s, in which she has a small role opposite Colin Firth, she develops incredible presence as a neurotic creature caught between longing and realism: Her acting is very open and transparent, and yet there is always something unsaid, something lost, cool in her gestures and characters. This makes them all the more unforgettable. A further foray into the past was *The Hours* (2002), in which Julianne Moore plays a weary housewife on the brink of suicide. Everything is perfect in this ideal 1950s world; her husband and son are all a little girl could ever dream of. And yet this idyll is lacking all life and passion. The illness of the characters Julianne Moore portrays is often hidden behind a stale façade. When everyday life leaves us without words, Julianne Moore's face starts talking.

We would have to mention many more roles to do justice to the versatility of the 50-year-old actress. Perhaps, though, we need to go back to the beginning to understand her success. She was born in 1960 in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Her mother has Scottish roots and was a social worker, her father was a military judge and was posted to various US Army bases. The family moved around a great deal, also spending several years in Germany; she graduated from high school in Frankfurt/Main. She has often talked about how influential these years of traveling were for her, how much she learned about the relativity of behavioral codes, cultural differences, and the ability to repeatedly adapt to different situations. To slip into roles. Which is also a form of overcoming social phobias. "I'm not scared of anything in acting," Moore once said. "We always have such established ideas about normality. But there are behavioral patterns you don't even imagine in your craziest dreams, and those are the ones I want to explore."

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Actors are vagabonds too. Something which for Julianne Moore, who lives an ordinary life in Manhattan with her husband and two children and strives for normality in the middle of a glamorous business, is now a nightmare. “No, I’m not an adventurer. Anyway, I moved often enough with my parents,” she says, explaining her need for a safe place to call home and her own house, which can also offer protection from the impertinences of the world, and above all the surreal cosmos of the movie industry. She once said that her grandparents came to New Jersey from Scotland. They had an English lawn there, roses on the terrace and a birdbath. It was unique in the neighborhood. “Whenever I went to Scotland with my mother, I used to see these lawns everywhere, cut short and very green and lush, and bird-baths and roses everywhere, but of course it looked different from my grandparents’ garden. In Scotland it is cool and rainy, and in New Jersey hot and dry. I realized how much they tried to bring their home country to America. I could understand them very well. I would miss a lot too.”

Julianne Moore is a great storyteller, and little recollections and anecdotes like these shed light on a great deal. You only have to watch talk show appearances, or interviews with the unpretentious star – she even calls herself a “chatterbox”, and that is no exaggeration. She is modest when it comes to her career. She must have been lucky, she admits. Everything fell into place in her life. “I took one step at a time,” she once said in an interview. “I was always very down-to-earth.”

The first step from non-mainstream theater to television was a brief appearance in the soap *The Edge of Night*. It was followed by the series *As the World Turns*, for which the actress won an Emmy. She came to the movie industry’s notice and achieved her breakthrough with the role of Marian Wyman in Robert Altman’s *Short Cuts* (1993), a film consisting of several short stories that caused quite a stir at the time. Moore played the artistically ambitious wife of a jealous doctor (Matthew Modine), well-off and coquettish, and the scene that made her famous overnight must have been rather shocking, at least for more prudish American viewers: During a fight with her husband, she pours wine on her skirt and takes it off to wash the stain out. She has nothing on under the skirt, which enrages her husband. The dialog between the half-dressed Julianne Moore and Matthew Modine intensifies for several minutes.

She repeatedly played challenging roles such as these, balancing somewhere between self-control and hysteria, under fantastic directors – in *Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994) by Louis Malle, *Safe* (1995) by Todd Haynes, *Boogie Nights* (1997) and *Magnolia* (1999) by Paul Thomas Anderson, *The Big Lebowski* (1998) by the Coen brothers and Atom Egoyan’s *Chloe* (2009). And she also starred in blockbusters, such as Steven Spielberg’s *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (1997) and *Hannibal* (2001), Ridley Scott’s sequel to *The Silence of the Lambs*.

The fact that these are just a few of the movies Julianne Moore has shot in the last 20 years is pretty impressive for a woman who as a teenager wanted nothing more than to have a role in a play at a provincial theater. She does not take it for granted that she has come so far. Perhaps that is her secret. She lives completely in the here and now, she once claimed. And she is a character actress. Which is also why she is less frightened of what has given many a female Hollywood star sleepless nights, namely getting older. We should be grateful that we are able to get older, she says. After all, the irrevocable end is death. “That is my motto.”

Like over 40 other celebrities, Julianne Moore supports *Hear the World*. And like all ambassadors of the initiative, she was photographed by rock star and photographer Bryan Adams in the conscious hearing pose, with her hand behind her ear. She is thus helping to promote an awareness of the issues of hearing and hearing loss.

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