

A FILM BY VALENTIN RIEDL

WITH CARLOTTA

# LOST

# INN

# FACE



SCREENPLAY VALENTIN RIEDL, FRÉDÉRIC SCHULD ANIMATION DIRECTOR FRÉDÉRIC SCHULD CINEMATOGRAPHY DORO GÖTZ EDITOR IVAN MORALES JR  
 SOUND DESIGN/RE-RECORDING ANDREAS HILDEBRANDT SOUND DESIGN ANIMATION SIMON BASTIAN MUSIC COMPOSER ANTIMO SORGENTE  
 COLORIST STEPHAN KUCH PRODUCTION MANAGER FLORIAN-MALTE FIMPEL PRODUCERS ERIK WINKER, MARTIN ROELLY  
 © 2020 A CORSO FILM PRODUCTION IN COLLABORATION WITH FILMSTAHL FUNDED BY FILM- UND MEDIENSTIFTUNG NRW,  
 DIE BEAUFTRAGTE DER BUNDESREGIERUNG FÜR KULTUR UND MEDIEN, FILMFERNSEHFONDS BAYERN

LOSTINFACE.FILM



# LOST IN FACE

DOCUMENTARY

81 min. / Germany 2020 / 1:1,85 / 2K / 5.1

Language: German, with English subtitles

A Film by Valentin Riedl

A production by CORSO Film

## CONTACT

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## SYNOPSIS

Carlotta cannot recognize faces, not even her own. For her, human faces are no bastion of trust, but places of fear and confusion. She is one of the 1% of all people whose part of the brain responsible for facial recognition does not work properly. With his film *LOST IN FACE*, neuroscientist Valentin Riedl travels through Carlotta's universe, full of anthropomorphic animals, lu-

cid dreams and bumpy false paths. He peels back her charming, idiosyncratic solutions that she employs to be able to join the masses of human conformity, until she one day decides to build a ship and leave her fellow humans. Her never-ending search for answers leads her to art—and thus an avenue to her own face and back to humanity.



## WHERE DID THE IDEA FOR LOST IN FACE COME FROM?

While flipping through a newspaper some five years ago, I became fascinated with one of Carlotta's pictures. The picture served as an attention-grabber for a local art exhibition in our neighborhood. Her self-portrait with its fine, auburn strokes evoked images of Da Vinci's precision and the facial expression was that of slight melancholy. I only then realized that the face had several eyes and the nose was not centered. I was perplexed as to why the face as a whole still worked and why my perception allowed me to be deceived. After that I read in the article that the artist suffered from prosopagnosia ("obliviousness of faces"), or face blindness, and had never perceived her own face.



Because I studied medicine and thanks to my work as a neuroscientist, I knew about the idiosyncratic characteristics of a specialized part of the brain. I was surprised to see, however, how a lack of ability to recognize human faces could lead to the creation of such an expressive portrait. The article lay on my desk for a few weeks before I finally decided to contact Carlotta and tell her about my film concept. When I first entered Carlotta's enchanted apartment, I immediately recognized that she had a lot to tell. Initially, she was not too excited about a film about herself. It took some time for me to convince her of it and its lovingly and objective nature. Carlotta herself likes to create elaborately designed films and has taken an active interest in the human brain. It led to a very symbiotic partnership, in which I, in exchange for the film, talked to her about my neuroresearch.

## HOW DOES A NEURORESEARCHER BECOME A FILMMAKER?

For me personally, film has always been the most powerful art medium with regard to emotion, perhaps due to the fact that the dark surroundings of a cinema stimulate numerous senses simultaneously. Since my school days, I have always been an avid photographer, but the filmmaking process had always seemed a bit too complex for me. Luckily, my girlfriend, an actor and filmmaker in her own right, involved me in one of her projects several years ago. Before I started with *LOST IN FACE*, I had spent several unfruitful months in frustrating toil on fictional material that was centered on the brain.

When I came across Carlotta's story in the newspaper, I quickly saw that there was no fiction that could do justice to the incredible power of the brain like Carlotta's story could. I then was fortunate enough to be able to convince several people in the film business to tell this story as a documentary—no easy task for someone from outside the film industry. I would like to especially thank Cathy de Haan and Luca Borkowsky from CINEMATCH Berlin for their support and belief, as well as Wim Wenders for his support with the Nachwuchspreis der Sparkassen-Kulturstiftung Rheinland (The Newcomer Prize by the Rhineland Sparkasse Cultural Foundation) and a grant from his foundation.



## HOW DOES OUR BRAIN PROCESS FACES?

Over the course of human evolution, the human brain has developed a small area behind our ears that is specialized in processing human faces. This “facial region” is called the fusiform face area and was not precisely described until 1992. The neurons in this region each analyze different aspects of the physiognomy whenever a human face enters our field of vision. Some neurons are

coded to process the distance between our eyes, others the length of our nose or lips. Somehow, the precise mechanism is not yet known, we create a total impression of a face, which enables us to precisely differentiate between and recognize hundreds of faces, as well as perceive and define the emotions therein.

## WHAT IS PROSOPAGNOSIA OR FACE BLINDNESS?

People who suffer from prosopagnosia or “face blindness” have a cognitive disorder in this brain region. 99% of the time the disorder is genetic; only in rare instances is it caused by a stroke. Current medical research says that roughly 1-2% of the global population suffers from some form of prosopagnosia. In Germany alone, that would mean over 1 million afflicted. People afflicted with prosopagnosia can see clearly and precisely, and can even describe certain aspects of faces perfectly. However, they are not able to recognize or commit to memory an entire face. I once read

the detailed description of a person suffering from the condition, who likened attempting to recognize a face to trying to recognize details of a bird and its feathers from an airplane. There are extreme variations in the severity of the disorder. Only in rare instances does the disorder cause similarly severe limitations like in Carlotta’s case, who cannot recognize herself in pictures or the mirror. Several prominent persons who suffer from the face blindness include the painter Chuck Close and neurologist Oliver Sacks.



## WHY DID YOU INCORPORATE ANIMATED SEQUENCES INTO THE FILM?

Initially, I wanted to use visual effects to illustrate Carlotta's disorder. It didn't take long for me to realize that every attempt to distort or erase faces in the film were not an accurate representation of the condition, as patients do not suffer from impaired vision. In our animated short film *CARLOTTA'S FACE*, we decided to forego showing faces entirely and illustrate others as stones. For the full-length film that was not an option, since the goal is also to get to know Carlotta.

If you ask Carlotta what her greatest burden is, it is primarily the social and emotional strain that arises from being

in the presence of other people that she may or may not be able to recognize. This fact is evinced by her dream diary, with which she grants us access to her most intimate thoughts. Instead of illustrating her visual disorder, I wanted to provide a space for Carlotta's memories and surreal dreams. Together with animation artist Frédéric Schuld we developed a cerebral world, in which Carlotta moves between memories. The animated dramaturgy tells the story of the imbalance of this cognitive fabric which arose over the course of her continual stress caused through the interaction with others.



## HOW CAN THE FILM IMPACT VIEWERS?

I initially thought that my knowledge of anatomy would allow me to present a clear picture of Carlotta's perception of reality. But it was not until some time after when I realized that I would never be able to fully comprehend Carlotta's complex and unique mode of perception. While we were filming, I was surprised to learn how many friends and acquaintances had at least minor difficulties in remembering faces. Although prosopagnosia is a very specific, neurological disorder, each of us has our own

unique neural network in our brains, whether its through our inherited genetics or subjective life experiences. The current state of scientific research says that our brains only roughly perceives our environment in grids and that the details are filled in by our preconceived notions. To this end, I hope the film creates awareness for this very special condition. Although each of us is equipped with a similar brain, which each have our own unique view of the world.





# TEAM

with	<b>Carlotta Lisa Günther Carlottas Mutter</b>
Director	<b>Valentin Riedl</b>
Director of Animation	<b>Frédéric Schuld</b>
Screenplay	<b>Valentin Riedl Frédéric Schuld</b>
Camera	<b>Doro Götz</b>
Editing	<b>Ivan Morales jr.</b>
Sound	<b>Valentin Riedl Tim Höfer</b>
Sound design and mixing	<b>Andreas Hildebrandt</b>
Sound design animation	<b>Simon Bastian</b>
Color correction	<b>Stephan Kuch</b>
Music	<b>Antimo Sorgente</b>
Production manager	<b>Florian-Malte Fimpel</b>
Producers	<b>Erik Winker Martin Roelly</b>

A production by **CORSO Film**  
in collaboration with **Filmstahl**

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Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (BKM),  
FilmFernsehFonds Bayern (FFF Bayern)**

## VALENTIN RIEDL

Doctor and neuroscientist Valentin Riedl studies how the human brain works. By combining abstract science with film as an art form, Valentin was nominated by Wim Wenders to receive the Förderpreis der Sparkassen-Kulturstiftung Rheinland (The Advancement Prize by the Rhineland Sparkasse Cultural Foundation) and a grant from the Wim Wenders Foundation. After completing several short films and the award-winning animated film **CARLOTTA'S FACE**, Valentin is making his feature-length film debut with his documentary **LOST IN FACE**.



## FILMOGRAPHY

### **BAUERNSTERBEN / BURNED SOIL**

short film, 13 min, 2012

### **RAUHNACHT / TWELFTH NIGHT**

short film (producer), 15 min, 2014

### **CARLOTTA'S FACE**

animated film (co-director: Frédéric Schuld), 5 min, 2018

### **LOST IN FACE**

hybrid documentary, 81 min, 2020



## CORSO FILM

The beginnings of CORSO Film lie in the year 2008 when Erik Winker, Martin Roelly and Andreas Brauer founded the production company HUPE Film in Cologne/Germany. With increasing success the company produced documentaries and fiction films for the national and international market. Until today the team considers intensive plot development and close cooperation with the authors most important. The films of the company are screened regularly on festivals worldwide and have been awarded several times. Since August 2016 Martin Roelly and Erik Winker are running the company under the new name CORSO Film. In December 2017 the company launched a new office in Stuttgart in South-Germany, led by Ümit Uludag.

The credits of CORSO Film include successful films such as **WORK HARD PLAY HARD** by Carmen Losmann (FIPRESCI

Prize DOK Leipzig, Prize of the Ecumenical Jury DOK Leipzig, Grimme Award), **FIGHTER** by Susanne Binninger (German Camera Award, preselected for the German Film Awards), **SEARCHING EVA** by Pia Hellenthal (Berlinale Panorama, Special Mention Int. Competition CPH:DOX, Audience Award Athens, HOT DOCS, Sheffield) or **HAPPY** by Carolin Genreith (German Critics' Award, Best Documentary Film Festival Bozen, preselected for the German Film Awards) and international co-productions like **A WOMAN CAPTURED** by Bernadett Tuza-Ritter (Documentary Competition Sundance, Main Competition IDFA, nominated for the European Film Awards), **15 CORNERS OF THE WORLD** by Zuzanna Solakiewicz (Award of the Semaine le la Critique Locarno, International Competition DOK Leipzig) or **AIDA'S SECRETS** by Alon Schwarz (HOT DOCS Toronto, Audience Award Doc Aviv).

