

FREDERIQUE

Slipping Out of Lingerie and Into Movies

By Jill Johnson

You may remember her Guess? and Revlon campaigns or her slew of sultry *Cosmopolitan* covers. You've definitely seen her bedroom eyes and bombshell bod in the ubiquitous Victoria's Secret catalog. And, now, you can find the Dutch diva Frederique Van der Wal on the big-screen as well (not to mention the small screen, with appearances in *Suddenly Susan* and *The Cosby Show*). While she didn't always dream of being an actress, the opportunity presented itself on her high-profile supermodel path and she's enjoying the challenge. "To call myself an actress, I wouldn't even do that yet. I'm just sort of making my feet wet," she says. But, with a resume which includes roles in Woody Allen's *Celebrity*, *2 Girls and A Guy with Robert Downey, Jr.*, and *Wild Wild West* with Will Smith, she's not exactly sloshing around in the kiddie pool.

JJ: Is going from modeling to acting an easy transition?

FV: Often you hear these stories of models turning into actresses, like it's something natural. Yes, we are exposed to it because we're in a certain industry and they want to have a certain look on screen, but I don't think it's at all a natural extension. I think it's such a separate craft. I find it very challenging and very interesting. It's hard, though, to find scripts that are really exciting to me. *Celebrity* was great, I mean working with a director like Woody Allen. But *Wild Wild West*, it was a great experience, but something like that I could never do again—being a prop on a movie and wasting that much time. The experience, I wouldn't change it for the world. The interesting thing is—which is probably why I

love living in America and in a city like New York—that so many opportunities cross your path, and you're allowed to explore and try new things and people are fine with it. Whereas in Holland, even though they're supposedly so open-minded, in many ways they are still more traditional. In Europe in general that's true. So, for me, acting is a whole new opening—I'm taking classes, I'm feeling it out.

JJ: Acting has become a trend among models, don't you think?

FV: It definitely has, but I don't think it's so much among models as among films and studios asking for it. That's where it started. And people say it never seems to work,

but we have many examples: Andie McDowell, Geena Davis, Uma Thurman.

JJ: Do you think there's a problem being typecast as a model?

FV: That's definitely a difficult thing. It's obvious why and I understand that, but for me that's the challenge—trying to see if at one point I could do something which is not the expected thing. At this point it hasn't been possible. It's hard to break loose from a certain image people have.

JJ: Do you have any advice for your average model on how to segue into acting?

FV: I think it's a very tough world. Whatever step of the ladder you're at, you're going to have, first of all, a lot of

rejection. You shouldn't take that too personally, in acting as much as in modeling. I've seen it at every level. I get rejected too. Especially for younger girls, that's something to keep in mind. Also, to take the classes and put the effort in. Sure, some people have a certain talent, but this is something which with practice you hopefully do get better. It's a career and a craft. With modeling, you either have it or you don't. With acting, it has to grow, and it's a long-term profession. I think that's where often models make their mistake, thinking "Oh, let me try that," just because they look a certain way and then they get cast that way.

JJ: What about acting agents?

FV: Oh, an agent is definitely a necessity. These days it's all very confusing, you have an agent and maybe a manager. And if you have a manager, maybe you don't need an agent. But it is important to have someone looking out for you—someone who knows what you want to do with your career.

JJ: Do models usually start with a commercial agent?

FV: That is a good way for models especially, because you have a commercial agent most of the time, and they do get the calls for roles where they're looking for a model type. That's a good way to break into it.

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