



MY DAD - KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS - RIVER KLEIN - MARION COTILLARD - WOODY ALLEN - CHARLINE VON HEYL

MARFA



* Temperature 30°C

306

Painter Charline von Heyl's motherland is Germany, Bonn to be precise, but home is now Marfa, USA, this publication's namesake. Her favourite t-shirt may say 'West Texas Cloud Appreciation Society' on it, but sadly for her, the sky today is clear.*

CHARLINE VON HEYL in conversation with KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS
Photographs RACHEL CHANDLER
Artworks courtesy of the artist & Petzel, New York
Thank you Elise Deringer
Location Brooklyn, New York City



The Giddy Road to Ruin
2015

This chat begins on page 285. Charline and Kristin are chatting over Zoom, Charline from Marfa, Texas, and Kristin from London, UK.

KRISTIN It's such a real moment, whilst also being kind of cheesy. He does it with such faith though, even with everyone else being a little bit embarrassed. The mother is as well, but actually, you fall in love with him at that time too.

CHARLINE Yeah. And it is true that before then, you don't quite understand why she's marrying him, he's such a doofus...

Charline quietly hums Joe Dassin's melody

KRISTIN It's such a good song, isn't it?

CHARLINE It really is! Did you grow up with French chansons? Were you one of those girls like myself?

KRISTIN Yes! I first went to France one summer when I was eleven. I was put on a plane to stay with these people I'd never met, in Aubagne, to learn the language.

CHARLINE I can't believe that you actually came away from that loving French.

KRISTIN The seed had been planted. I remember watching *A Man and a Woman* by Claude Lelouch late at night and thinking about the sound of the wind, the windscreen wipers, the Mackintoshes that the characters wore, and Anouk Aimée, who I thought was the most beautiful woman in the world. I wanted to be her when I grew up. I always thought there was something very exotic about France, with it being so fascinatingly close. Everything was different there. The women were chic, they had wonderful hair and wore white jeans.

Charline mimics a fashionable French lady zhuzhing her coiffure

CHARLINE When did your fondness for French music begin?

KRISTIN From an early age. I listened to Sylvie Vartan with the girl I was staying with, en boucle!



Voyage
2008

CHARLINE And Johnny Hallyday?

KRISTIN Yes, of course! He embodies passion, love and romance. I want to talk about romance actually. Possibly the most romantic thing that's ever happened to me is to have written a story [*My Mother's Wedding*] about a love affair, one where a woman's life gets immeasurably better because she's met a good man, and I got married to the man who I wrote it with, John. What about you, what would you say has been the most romantic moment in your life?

CHARLINE Aww. For me, the first thing that came to my mind was just before I married Christopher [Wool], I had come home pretty drunk after an evening out with the girls and fell into bed still wearing my clothes. I woke up the next morning still in my clothes but had a *New Yorker* cartoon pinned to my lapel captioned, «Euro trash or Euro treasure?» I knew right then that he was the one.

Kristin smiles

KRISTIN Brilliant! Speaking of Europe, your big show in Athens sounds fantastic, how long is that on for?

CHARLINE Yes, it's called *The Giddy Road to Ruin* and it opened at The George Economou Collection. It's on until next March, or so. It was really great to do, but I'm a little exhausted. I'm an introvert, so the three-day extravaganza of press and such it involved was a lot.

KRISTIN Yeah, I hear you. Then you have to go and lie down in a dark room.

CHARLINE I did exactly that. I have another exhibition coming up in Brussels with Xavier Hufkens Gallery so am already anticipating all of that again.

KRISTIN What's your way of resourcing yourself?

CHARLINE Well, half of the time, I'm actually in Marfa, Texas, which is weird because this magazine is called MARFA... Since there is not much else to do, I often read and go to the swimming pool. It's really relaxing and good for work that way, but the absurd thing is - and you're probably similar to me like this - I cannot easily recover from painting because I only feel alive when I paint.



Charline reclines on her chair, stretching her arms

KRISTIN Oh yes. For example, once we got the edit done on *My Mother's Wedding*, I could just feel myself powering down and going quite deeply into a state of exhaustion. How did you decide to do what you do? Has it always been this way for you?

CHARLINE It was never a decision, I just knew from very early on. When other kids were saying they wanted to be veterinarians, I always proclaimed that I would be a painter. There was an annoying surprise when I started at art school, though, as whatever I made was not to my satisfaction. The artist I had in mind for myself had nothing to do with the work that I was doing. But then I saw the paintings some of the dudes made in the early '80s, they were great, funny and ruthless. Suddenly something clicked, and I thought, «Okay, you can do that». It was a disturbance, something apart from yourself that reflects your own energy.

KRISTIN And did you compare yourself to other people?

CHARLINE Never, and I still don't.

KRISTIN You're very lucky to be able to do that. It's a true talent to want to say things in a very individual way and not want to do what somebody else is doing.

Mid-flow, Charline twists and returns her copy of *Memory Theatre* to the full floor-to-ceiling bookshelves behind her

CHARLINE But I am always looking at images, right now I am looking again at Ben Nicholson for example.

KRISTIN Now you mention it, I can see the slightly ghost-like figures of his work in the background of your work as well.

CHARLINE It's actually all about the line. There are very few painters who can stay painterly but come completely from the line. Picasso is one of them. But then there are artists like Ben Nicholson, the line that he has everywhere, so thin and so precise, carries the whole painting.



Blue shirt: MARTINA; YEE Black wool «Verity» Jacket: £3,470; THE ROW '90s «D» Jacket: £3,470; LIZZY'S Glasses: MASAHIROMARUYAMA «Arizona» sandals: £231; RICK OWENS x BIRKENSTOCK





Denial
2023



Joan
2022



Donkey Girl
2023



A Child Telling a Joke
2022

KRISTIN The tension in it.

CHARLINE I mean, in my paintings, the line is usually the outline of things, but the dirty secret of them is that they really come from drawing on the canvas. It starts with the initial movement. I don't have a concept, there's no vision of anything. It really comes from the body first and then from the 'I' being my body. And the 'I' being faster than my mind. I'm really just reacting to what I have done, pushing it into a direction that I would have never expected.

KRISTIN Gosh, that's reassuring to hear, I don't know why... that's made me very happy. I love the idea of painting being visceral, an energy coming out rather than making a decision of, «Today I'm going to put a blob of blue there». It's confusing to me that something could be premeditated and not instinctive.

Kristin briefly closes her eyes

CHARLINE It's the same with your work, in the end it comes down to editing. You might do a scene fifteen times, and then you find the one that rings true. I'm the same, I overpaint things a thousand times before it looks like something that gets me a step further, that sparks my own curiosity. Then I'm at a point that I'm like, «How the fuck did I do that?» And I could never actually repeat it.

KRISTIN Because it just sort of lives there?

CHARLINE Yes, exactly. I have to give it its own life and then try and do it again. It's like your face in the movies or theatre, you're basically offering yourself for projection, and everybody is going to see it.

KRISTIN Exactly. And it's reassuring that we're all trying to do the same thing: to tell stories, to create emotions and to try and be understood. I realised about - oh gosh - ten years ago now, that especially when I was younger, I used to do a lot of really sad characters. I did the Sophocles play *Electra* at the Old Vic, and she was the saddest character of all. She's so angry, and that was my motor for more emotional roles. All the characters I play have this dark thread running through them, a secret tragedy that they haven't told anyone.

CHARLINE What does that mean to you?



KRISTIN I saw how it came from me wanting to be able to communicate the sadness I had in myself. I needed to tell people without telling them about me, it was about being understood. I carried around this enormous sadness, hoping that somebody might eventually say, «I understand what you're saying».

CHARLINE Yes, to give it space so that it can be fitted by somebody else within their own story.

KRISTIN I've stopped doing that now, I just do happy things. I said, «Okay, I don't want to do any more tragedies». I say that and I'm in fact doing a tragedy next year!

Charline laughs

CHARLINE So much for happy endings!

KRISTIN It's because I've communicated all those feelings, so now I don't feel scared to do a tragedy again. I've run dry, I've got nothing left for that. It's also why I moved on to other things, one of them being filmmaking, something I really enjoyed and which ended up being very different from what I thought it was going to be. There's something in this period of our lives where we are able to recognise our heritage and personal histories, and use it and make the most of it.

CHARLINE Use it. Make the most of it. Exactly. That's a good final statement. That's exactly right!

KRISTIN I've so enjoyed this conversation, you're not going to be in New York in August, are you?

CHARLINE No, I'm going to be...

KRISTIN Nobody is in New York in August.

CHARLINE I'll be in Europe. It would be great to find a way to continue this conversation, though...

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Hot / Cold
Attractive
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Charm itself, Dame Kristin Scott Thomas is on set in Juergen Teller’s London studio. The actress and director presses play on a television remote and one of the photographer’s short films begins, the ins and outs of which we won’t divulge here.*

*see page 303

KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS in conversation with CHARLINE VON HEYL
Photographs JUERGEN TELLER
Creative Partner DOVILE DRIZYTE
Styling VANESSA REID
Hair Kei Terada
Make-Up Daniel Sallstrom
Casting Simone Schofer
Photography Assistant Felipe Chaves
Styling Assistants Sam Riki Wright & Harry Langford
Make-Up Assistant Martina Derosa
Thank you Laura Symons
Location Juergen Teller Studio, London



Tweed padded top £4000, midi skirt £2790 ALAÏA

As a heatwave descends on London, we prepare to perspire by listening in on a very cool, transatlantic conversation between our cover stars, Kristin Scott Thomas and Charline von Heyl. Kristin picks up the phone in her guest bedroom, a chilly white-walled refuge, and the pair exchange greetings, then pleasantries, before getting to chatting

CHARLINE When I was thinking about this call, I said to myself, «If I was at a dinner party sat next to Kristin, what would be my first question to her?» And I realised it would be about silence.

Kristin nods

KRISTIN Hmm.

CHARLINE The way that you operate as an artist, your face is always transforming, there's something behind what you do with silence. It's similar to how I paint, with the point being how silence can unfold as you do it. Even though there are these gestures and content screaming on the surface, there must be silence underneath.

KRISTIN That's such an interesting observation. I really enjoy silence... except in acting!

Charline laughs

CHARLINE Oh, how come?

KRISTIN I think the mind works very quickly, so there's nothing that infuriates me more than actors who pause and think, «What am I going to say now?» It should just happen. Though, there's certainly a difference between pausing for reflection and a chosen silence. A chosen silence is a very, very powerful thing - something beautiful and lovely to play with. And though it can also be terrifying, I'm never afraid of it.

CHARLINE That's what I think is at the basis of your work. You allow yourself to play on top of this interiority without slipping out of character. It really is more than just an interruption, it's kind of a disturbance on a deeper level.

KRISTIN I've done a couple of Harold Pinter plays, and they are often thought of as scary because there are pauses and silences, commas, dashes, colons and semicolons - the punctuation and the rhythm of it is incredibly precise. A pause is different from a silence, so you have to create the rules before you start. To an actor, a pause can be very frightening, «What does that mean? What do I do with my hands?» I found working with Pinter's very strict instructions incredibly liberating. It was exciting and easy to learn. In the acting business, we always laugh about people who say, «Oh, how did you learn all those lines?» However, we all have our own things that we find easy to take on.

CHARLINE Do you have a system for it? There's this '60s book by Frances Yates called *The Art of Memory*, and she writes about the history of learning. Before there was written text, there was theatre. The way it seems to have worked in Greek theatre was that there would be visual cues around the stage to remind performers of their lines. They would walk from one side of the stage to the other looking for these cues, maybe it would be a particularly placed column or flower as...

KRISTIN Triggers?

CHARLINE Yes! Simon Critchley used sections of Yates' pretty nutty book in his novel *Memory Theatre* - it's more accessible to short-attention span readers like myself.

KRISTIN Wait, I need to write that down. I live in a house with a journalist, but no pen. So what was that, Frances Yates?

As Kristin sources a writing tool, Charline congratulates the actress on her recent nuptials to John Micklethwait, her partner of five years. MARFAMILY, too, extends our well wishes to the happy couple

CHARLINE Exactly.

KRISTIN And also the writing. However good the writing maybe for a film, it's not the same as that of plays. They've been around for a really long time, most of the plays I've done anyway are decades, if not centuries, old. Whether it's Sophocles, Pinter, Chekhov or whatever, they've stayed relevant for a



Top DURAN LANTINK



Coat, stole, trousers, headpiece ISSEY MIYAKE



Dress SCHIAPARELLI
Roll-neck ALAINPAUL



Top, roll-neck, trousers ALAINPAUL
Sunglasses JACQUES MARIE MAGE
Shoes SAINT LAURENT by ANTHONY VACCARELLO



Roll-neck, jacket, petticoat, heels SAINT LAURENT by ANTHONY VACCARELLO

reason, and that reason is that they're really, really beautifully written and they stand up to time. It makes them incredibly easy to learn.

CHARLINE Because of the naturalism of the writing?

KRISTIN No, surprisingly. Off-the-cuff moments that sound very natural should be much easier to learn in theory because it's supposedly like everyday speech. However, they're more difficult as it's never how you speak yourself, making it much harder to absorb. Have you ever watched *Fleabag*?

CHARLINE Yes, of course!

KRISTIN There's that scene in *Fleabag* where my character Belinda speaks about the brilliance of menopause, saying, «Women have pain built in - it's our physical destiny». That scene was so successful and truly resonated with people, I've had many young women writing to me to say how great «people are all we've got» is.

CHARLINE It's so right on, the whole dialogue.

KRISTIN It's completely brilliant, though it has nothing to do with me, it's all Phoebe Waller-Bridge. She wrote all of that. And let me tell you, it was really difficult to learn! Everything Belinda says in that speech is exactly what I've been dying to say, you know, all my life, well since puberty, I suppose. I was so behind everything she said. And then to have these words given to you, they are very specific.

CHARLINE And Phoebe is so aware of timing in dialogue.

KRISTIN Exactly. It means you have to really obey her instructions. There was one thing that I kept getting wrong - I kept thinking about built-in cupboards or built-in dishwashers or built-in fridges, and saying built-in pain, the wrong order!

Charline holds her head in hands

CHARLINE I would have gotten that wrong too!

KRISTIN I could see her getting crosser and crosser, poor thing. There's so many zones of danger as far as memory is concerned, as we age or through changes in our physiology. The memory fluctuates.

CHARLINE Well, I do think it changes. Me and you, Kristin, are exactly the same age, one month apart, and I have noticed it with myself. I think it's also really interesting how it works. For the longest time, you just think you're this really young noodle that's trapped in this body that is changing. And then suddenly you realise, no, actually, you have changed as well. That girl is still there, but she is also evolving. For the longest time, your mind drives your body, you're just ahead of it in this weird way, and then suddenly it starts to shift - you get carried along in a different way by it. I find it weirdly relaxing. I'm actually happier than I've ever been now.

KRISTIN Yeah, me too.

CHARLINE Your directorial debut, *My Mother's Wedding*, is all about memory. You represented memories through these cartoon-like drawings, which was a really good solution because one thing that I find extremely annoying in movies - apart from the fact that suitcases seem to be always empty - are flashbacks.

KRISTIN Oh god! Totally. Or kids wearing a wig that's too big! There's something about being this age where things are constantly changing in your life. For example, I've recently lost my mother and stepfather. I've got two sisters and two brothers, we're all very close, and when we start talking about times our mother did this or did that, one of us always says, «But she didn't do that at all. What are you talking about?» There are all these different ways of looking at things, which I tried to explore in that film. Three daughters of a woman, with different dads, who all have distinct attitudes towards their upbringings, and none of them remember what happened in the same way.

CHARLINE And there's that really beautiful moment, where the scene seems to stop, as James Fleet's character bravely sings a song by Joe Dassin to his beloved in front of everyone, and they're blown away. He silences everything.

Kristin and Charline's interview continues on page 308



Four Weddings and a Funeral
1994



Bitter Moon
1992



Under the Chery Moon
1986



The English Patient
1996



Kristin holds a television remote, pressing pause on Juergen Teller's short film *Men* (2023), featuring an intimate act of friendship between Alexander Skarsgård and the photographer in the arctic circle



Shirt, trousers, scarf, slides PHOEBE PHILO