

## **ARTISTS' WORLDS #1: INTERVIEW BETWEEN ARTISTS JEAN-PIERRE SERGENT & CLAUDIE FLOUTIER | BESANÇON | FRANCE | JUNE 9 2023**

Filmed at Claudie Floutier studio-apartment's on June 9, 2023. Cameras: Lionel Georges. Thanks to Millie Floutier & Guillaume Chilleme for helping with transcriptions and Christine Dubois for proofreading.

### **- PART 1/4 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)**

Jean-Pierre Sargent: Hello, everybody, today is June 9, 2023, and I have the great good fortune and honor of interviewing my friend Claudie Floutier, who is an artist and was also my teacher at the Besançon School of Fine Arts. We're here in her studio-apartment, and we're going to show some of the work you've done throughout your career. So, to begin with, you often talk about your childhood with your grandfather. It was in Provence. And you lived a bit like a wild woman, a tomboy, a bit in the wild, picking aromatic and medicinal herbs with him.

Claudie Floutier: With my grandfather!

JPS: Yes, well, if you'd like please, to tell us about your childhood.

CF: Well, I was born after the war, just after the war, and we weren't rich at home, not at all. My parents were really poor. When I was born, my parents thought it would be more interesting for me to go to live with my grandfather, who had two gardens and as so I could be fed more easily, whereas my father didn't have not enough financial means to support me, in fact. So I went to live for five years, until I went to school, because at the time, we didn't have kindergarten, with my grandfather, in a farmhouse in Apt, at the foot of the Luberon Mountains! At the time, my grandfather was a retired railway worker, and he had a friend who was a herbalist and therefore his second occupation, after his gardens was to herborize. So he used to take me along with him. And then I was extremely happy living with my grandfather and grandmother in Apt during all those years. I really enjoyed this life, which was also very humble, very simple, secluded, because I was living in a farmhouse. Perhaps I've never felt as happy as I did then. Because there were no disturbances, just smells of nature and magnificent landscapes... My grandfather was a quiet man, fairly silent, but he was an extremely tender with me, that's how he gave me a lot of love and attention. And then I felt comforted. So it was a very, very beautiful early childhood.

JPS: Yes, you were lucky enough to live completely in nature.

CF: Yes, to the fullest. We lived in a farmhouse that didn't belong to him. He wasn't rich either, so he had this Provencal farmhouse with chickens and rabbits to feed us, of course. But he rented this farmhouse, half of it... Because the second part was occupied by an Italian family, named Carboni, who were poor as well because it was at the end of the World War II. Mr. Carboni was a bricklayer, and they each rented this small farm that suited them... It was in the countryside and it was magnificent. In fact, I went to see this farmhouse again some time ago with Millie. It was extraordinary to see it again! It really was!

JPS: Millie, it's your daughter you've raised all alone?

CF: Yes, she's my daughter, whom I raised all by myself.

JPS: Yes, so maybe you could tell us more about your career as an Art teacher at the School of Fine Arts of Besançon?

CF: If you like, after all the traveling I have done... et cætera, et cætera.

JPS: So, maybe, tell us about all your journeys, if you like to?

CF: My travels! In other words, I started my childhood at my grandfather's house, where people were really simple... My grandfather was very curious, even if we didn't really have many books. We just did have: the *Almanach Vermot* (famous French Yearbook including calendars : agricultural, religious and recipes etc.) and the *Life on the rail magazine* (talking about railways all around the World), because he was a railwayman... Yes, and that's what finally enabled me to travel to Peru, because I had read about it, them when I was around five. At that time then, I went back to his house for every vacation. So I read this "Life of the railways" where I realized that there was the longest cogwheel railroad that crossed Peru and climbed the mountains. And I thought, this is great! And also after having read Tintin: "I've really got to get on that train one day!" So off I went on my journey to Peru. After my childhood with my grandfather, I lived in another small village. Then there was boarding school, where I wasn't a very bright student because all I did was to read and draw. So it was all the same. But anyhow, I managed to pass the the baccalaureate and I also passed the Open Competition of Drawing for High schools. My parents were very modest and had never ever seen an exhibition in their lives. But the fact that I succeeded in my studies was a great help. And to have earned this diploma, meant that they had confidence in me to go to the School of Fine Arts in Montpellier. So I also studied Italian for a while, because with parents who'd never seen an exhibition, I had to be a guarantor of something! I could have been as well an Italian teacher.... But that was soon sorted out. I went to the School of Fine Arts, where I had an extraordinary painting teacher called Monsieur Dezeuze. Thanks to him, I went to McGill University in Montreal, and afterwards he found me a job at Lefranc Bourgeois... After a trip to Paris, where

I also went to the Beaux-Arts de Paris, thanks to a providential meeting at this school, and after seeing that finally, I wouldn't be able to get by financially, I passed a competitive examination to become a teacher at the School of Fine Arts in Metz. But I'd already done a lot of researches on color, in relation to Lefranc Bourgeois (French company selling artist's paints), and I was able to pass the exam without any problems, thanks to the experience I'd already had. Then, after four years, I took a competitive examination to teach at the School of Fine Arts in Besançon, to be closer to my ex-husband. I've been here ever since and I actually love being in Besançon.

JPS: So you taught at the School of Fine Arts in Besançon for almost forty years?

CF: Yes... But I taught in Metz first, and then in Besançon. I was teaching the color in the first cycle of art. And in fact, I was immediately fascinated, because I already had this relationship with color, but I was already drawing as a child, I drew, I drew so much, so I had this relationship with color because I had introduced the Liquitex artist's paints colors in France in the 70s. I worked with only the three primaries colors and since that time, I've never stopped working with primaries. What's more, I realized during the working process, that I could, apart from absolute black and white, still provide the exact colors I needed. (Because if you mix the complementary primaries, you end up with almost black). So I worked on these complements and, at the same time, I was doing yoga. Indeed, the fact of going infinitely deeper into color made me realize that, in the end, this complementarity of colors came back to the unity of the World. Because with the red and green pair and the other two complementary pairs, you have the whole World, in reduction. So I was totally passionate about it. I taught this notion of the three primaries in my color classes.... A long time later, I saw an exhibition by Charlotte Salomon at the Jewish Art Museum in Paris. This woman died in a concentration camp. She was pregnant, she was young and she was denounced and deported. And it was this beautiful exhibition about her work, this woman had really an incredible charm! She was both a musician and a great painter, who worked also with all three primaries colours. So, when I realized that, between the music that was played during the exhibition, and the quality of her work... Because she was telling us her story, just as I'm telling mine, with these three primaries! Then, I said to myself: "*Wow, these affinities come from very far away, from very deep!*". It wasn't her who showed me the way, but I found myself in complete compassion and harmony with this woman and having a great tenderness for her, even though she'd been dead for a long time... And, yes, I really enjoyed my job teaching at the School of Fine Arts. At the same time, when I stopped, I continued to love what I was doing with my life. Like my grandfather, who was a railway worker, when he retired, well, he became an herbalist. I just continued to do my little things, my little bits and pieces, I continued my life. I didn't miss teaching at all, even though I really enjoyed it very much. I filled my life in some other ways anyway.

JPS: Yes, of course, but as a student, I'd like to thank you very much, because it's true that you opened our minds to other worlds. It's very important for an artist to have a master (or mistress) in quotation marks... because Art need to be learned too.

CF: Well, yes, I too learned from my teachers at the Art School. My teachers weren't very complicated, they weren't great intellectuals, but that was fine. They knew the trade and, above all, we were out in nature. We weren't yet into the concept of art as nowadays, so it wasn't complicated. I learned from them and then, since I was working at Lefranc Bourgeois, I was able to learn on the job. Then I did all the training courses I could in understanding color, yoga and so on. I'm constantly deepening my knowledge. And at the same time, I'm always curious.

JPS: Yes, that's it, we often talk about the books we read!

CF: Of course, I read and I'm always enthusiastic towards life. And then I find that Art is nevertheless an extraordinary tool to enter into a world that is both strange and marvellous and to enter even more deeply into Life!

JPS: I wanted to quote something I found yesterday on Twitter. It's a phrase by Hermann Hesse, who did a lot of work on Hindu philosophies and spirituality. He's an important person for all us artists. He says this: "*There aren't so many things from which you can expect help, things that reassure you and help you to live; it's important to know them*". We were talking a bit earlier about knowledge, and it's very important that you, as a teacher, have had a culture open to the World. Because we often talk about Mexico together, we often talk about other cultures, including Hindu cultures. That's what you've passed on to us, and that's what emerges also through your work. Perhaps you'd like to show us some examples of your work or quote some texts?

CF: Yes, so I could quote a few texts and in answer to your question: "*Have you done any large formats?*" Yes, I've done large formats... And in particular, I had undertaken, after reading the *Rubaiyats*, to do a series on the *Rubaiyats*, in my own way. These were large-scale formats, which I'll show you later...

JPS: *Rubaiyat*, in other words? What reference are the *Rubaiyat*?

CF: Yes, Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*. I was so caught up in this reading and, at the same time, the Gulf War was starting... And I was against the first Gulf War, I demonstrated in the City shouting: "*NO TO WAR! NO TO WAR! NO TO WAR!*" But then, the stupidity of all the world's leaders is such! That, in any case, there's nothing you can do. So reading the *Rubaiyat* was really healing for me, now, I'm going to read some short extracts of it, because it has a deep connection with my work.

JPS: Oh yes, Very good!

CF: - "# 110. *On the day when this celestial steed of golden stars was saddled, when the planet of Jupiter where the Pleiades were created, from that day on, the divan of the feast fixed our fate. In what then are we guilty, since such is the portion we have been given.*" # 129. *In the midst of this whirlwind of the world, hasten to pick some fruit. Sit on the throne of gaiety and bring the cup to your lips. God is heedless of worship and sin. So enjoy here below what pleases you.*"

- "# 232. *You asked me what this phantasmagoria of things here below is all about. It would take too long to tell you the whole truth. It's a fantastic image that emerges from a vast sea and then enters that same vast sea back again.*"

JPS: So this is by Omar Khayyam?

CF: Yes, these are *quatrains* # 110, 129, 232 of the *Rubaiyat*. At another point, he says: "*This handful of donkeys placed between two oxen*". That is exactly what we are! I was really extremely touched by these texts. I read them anew recently because of what's going on in all these countries around the World, stirred up by all these wars, by all this fury against women... I heard this morning on the radio that little girls in Afghanistan, young women who were going to school, were poisoned, simply because they were going to school! That's really despairing! Omar Khayyam, after all, is a man of the East.

- "# 348. *This wheel of heaven chases my death and yours, friend, it conspires against my soul and yours. Come, come and sit on the grass, for we have very little time left before other grass sprouts from my dust and yours.*"

## - PART 2/4 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

JPS: So Claudie, you wanted to present us some of your drawings. Which series are you showing us now?

CF: Yes, somehow, my work is in a constant state of metamorphosis, in other words, I don't have a straight line, I draw a lot, then I paint, then I write, so they're all very different series. You asked me about the Rembrandt's series? A few years ago, I went to Amsterdam and was completely fascinated in front of this really tiny drypoint etching by Rembrandt, which really showed me how Rembrandt was deeply aware, at his end, of his nakedness and his solidarity with the World. But above all... I don't really understand, it remains mysterious... I love so much this small etching so much. He is there present, he looks at us and says: "Forgive me, forgive me, forgive me...". Or, also, I'm trying to tell you how much I am not only this great painter, but also this man full, full, of contradictions and fears, anxieties... of loneliness, but also of inner strength. Because he is both, at the same time, very sad and very strong. As a result, I became so attached to him, that I drew some out, I did draw... I draw so much! I

spend two years on this project and then afterwards, I also find texts that comfort me. Who also knows with what strangeness of my fellows, this face opposite confronts itself in me groping and trying to be understood". Henri Michaux in *Passage*: seeks to be understood... it's done... Voilà... And then, Pierre Reverdy, in *Plupart du temps, collection 1915-1922, Autre face*: "*Black eyes! But they're pince-nez. A shadow slides over the cheeks. Two tears run down the cheeks. Is it for me or because of the sun? No one dares ask who they're looking at, and everyone takes the glance for themselves. I'm afraid that I am too small and too far away. I'm certainly too far away and the one in front of me is getting closer. To reassure myself, I tell myself that the eyes can't see everything, and there's nothing left in the heart but what it can hold.*" Voilà! "*There's nothing left in the heart but what it can hold.*" That's it, and it's extraordinary!

JPS: So, you want to talk a little about the existential void and getting out of it through Art, somewhere?

CF: With Rembrandt it's Art that saved him...

JPS: Yes, but isn't that a question we can ask? We all feel this sense of finitude, and Rembrandt expressed it beautifully!

CF: Yes, yes, yes, as far as I'm concerned, there are writers whom I love deeply, who also say essential things... I read a very beautiful book by Salman Rushdie, which I used to introduce this series: "Life comes (how shall I put it) near to its end. You realize that you don't own anything, that you haven't found your place, that you're just using things for a while. The inanimate world laughs at you, you'll leave one day, but it'll stay here. What I'm saying isn't very deep, Sally, it's Winnie-the-Pooh philosophy (and that's exactly what I am : Winnie-the-Pooh), I know, but it's still heartbreaking." So, I'm not much of a philosopher, I am doing my Winnie-the-Pooh's philosophy, I'm someone who is always seeking for things, and I can also find some in reading, which I love enormously. And here's a passage from Michel Houellebecq: "*In the midst of complete physical collapse...*". Because Rembrandt himself, all his life, spoke of nothing but this, because he speaks only of his own time, when he makes his self-portraits. You see, Rembrandt himself became aware that "*vanity of vanities, all is vanity*". And for me, this is the essential basis, I believe, of my work: "*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*"... Everything is collapsing... "*In the midst of widespread physical collapse, which is what old age is all about, the voice and the gaze bear irrefutable witness to the persistence of character, aspirations, desires, everything that constitutes a human personality*". In *The Map and the Territory* by Michel Houellebecq.

JPS: By the way, he was talking about an artist in this book, about Contemporary Art and an artist, yes!

CF: Yes, I am quoting him because : "*At the end of the day, there's nothing left but loneliness, cold and silence*". He says: "*Then you stop laughing... You always end up with a broken heart... You stop laughing...*" When you die, you don't know how much you're laughing... And so it is for me, given that I've spent my life... Fortunately, I was a single mother and I was lucky enough to have a daughter, whom I raised... But somehow, loneliness is important, when you're a single mother, so when I wasn't looking after Millie or teaching art, I enthusiastically fell back on drawing, painting and writing... As so, you can break the solitude when you're in that creative state, you're in your world and that world, despite the fact that you don't always do happy things, it's a wonder to be into a creative mind!

JPS: Of course, yes! Maybe you'd like to present us a few pages like that, in silence, so that people can have a look at your work. And then I'll scan them and put them in the video. There, you've put all the papers you wanted to show us today, or do you want to show others?

CF: Small, very small formats. This is a slightly sad note, but I'm a multi-faceted character: *John who cries, John who laughs*. So, John who cries and then John who laughs ! And then, as I like to draw a lot, for a while, I drew little objects from my house. Some small objects, so this is a completely different way of drawing, because I don't use shadows at all, I just work with the line...

JPS: Like in the Middle Ages.

CF: Well, obviously, I like a lot Middle Ages art works. This is a little drawing of objects I have at home, that I bought in Mykonos or on the Greek islands. So I did this little drawing and I added that: "plus the seagulls" because the sea was missing, after all, in this drawing. So I wrote: "plus the seagulls". These are also objects I have at home. This is an object I brought back from Peru, well, these are statuettes I brought back from my travels. I like stones... I've made this connection between objects. Here, too, is a statuette I've brought back, and here again, I'd put this phrase that obsesses me a little: "*Polishes its weapons, its jades, its gods, its songs, its grelots from a few decades ago, a troop emerges from the water, then everything cascades and returns to the blur*". Quote from Norge, a poet I like very much... That is, from one day to the next, I stop something and I do the exact opposite, because I feel that if I do a lot, a lot, then, I'll get saturated. And when I've finished saturating, I say to myself, "*Oh, I've got to enjoy myself anyway, what am I going to do to enjoy myself?*" So I start again, but at the exact opposite, it's a complete pirouette. I say to myself: "*Am I going to write? Will I paint? Am I going to draw?*" But I don't really ask myself this question like that, it's because I'm like that, that I do the opposite, because it pleases me to seek all-around, to turn things upside-down. So, at the same time, I'm a very attentive person, but I do Philosophy and Art, a bit like Winnie the Pooh. In other words, for me, Art is something that's both extremely important, but at the same time such a pleasure that I'll also

seek pleasure in anything, i.e. in any form of work, even things that are a little crude, a little vulgar... But if I'm going for this slightly crude, slightly vulgar side, it's because all of a sudden, I want to state, quote: "*Stop the Art, good taste is tiring like good company!*" Said Picabia. So let's go and do something that's different from what you are expecting from me! I'm different and that's that!

JPS: Yes, you're not locked into any mind framework, you are a free spirit!

CF: No framework at all!, in the sense that I'm a nobody... I don't have a gallery, I'm not famous, etc. So, let's have fun... Well, let's have fun and please, let me have fun already! Let's have fun! I'm having fun! But I'm doing it in a very serious matter...

### - PART 3/4 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

JPS: We're now at Part 3 and I'd like to ask you a question, as you often are talking about your double, your alter ego, your "Trobéïrice" character. Trobairitz is a feminine form of troubadour, in the langue d'Oc, the language of your native region. Occitan-speaking poetesses and composers, they lived in the south of France in the 12th and 13th centuries. We're back to the Middle Ages somehow. So, did you create this character to escape a nowadays life that was too difficult, a reality that was too flat, too absurd, too disappointing? Do you want to restore joy and re-enchant the world? And does art somehow reinitialize life? In a way, it's our role as artists to enchant the world once more?

CF: I think Trobéïrice came about as a form of resistance, a protective force in this warlike world, in relation to wars all over and so on. And then, above all, in relation to the fact that I really wanted, me, to be protected? Well, I don't really know, because it came out of nowhere... By this enchanting little character as a lot of power. When Trobéïrice is with me, I feel as if she's my grigri. And it's helping me to resist, sort of, this decay of the World, this form of World that is endlessly dominated by the same powers... And Trobéïrice, she's a poetess after all, and she's also a form of feminine resistance. So that's what she is, it's all about the feminine. And of course, I'd also worked a lot on this notion of the troubadour. Firstly: because I'm from there; secondly: because I'm very fond of Jacques Roubaud writings, who, regarding to me, is a great poet, philosopher and mathematician and member of L'Oulipo (L'Ouvroir de littérature potentielle).

JPS: Can you tell us who he is?

CF: Jacques Roubaud is a poet and philosopher.

JPS: From what period?

CF: From the 20th century and who worked a lot on the troubadours and who

wrote an essential book, which is called: "The inverted flower, The art of troubadours". It's a very serious, well-documented book, with a lot of informations, and I had read it a lot. And I said to myself: Trobéïrice, she's also born from this knowledge and interest, I am have for the troubadours histories. So I named this character Trobéïrice because I've incorporated myself into this Medieval Art; because after all, as far as I'm concerned, all my sources aren't necessarily in Contemporary Art! It's everything I've encountered during my numerous travels and so on. Also in my visits to museums, both the Musée du Quai Branly (Ethnical Museum) and the Folk Arts and Traditions Museums. In other words, my sources are a bit like Picasso's: elsewhere than in what I see as very contemporary. I go to Contemporary Art exhibitions, but I don't feed on contemporary artists works, I feed on everything that has deeply fascinated me, that has interested me, whether it's the Quai Branly, which I love, or the Cluny Museum (Medieval Museum), where I go very often, now that it's been renovated with all the work on medieval sculpture and so on. I'm passionate about it and really inspired by it! But on the other hand, I've spelled Trobairitz differently, since I'm also that Winnie-the-Pooh character. It's not Trobairitz, it's TROBEIRICE! I run the end of the word, spelling it, not in a noble way, but more popularly, underlining it with this spelling, thanks to the strong hindsight my southern accent gives me, because I keep my accent of which I am proud, because I'm from a certain part of France and above all, because I've also read Pierre Bourdieu in his book: *The Distinction*, he says: "*Accents ensure that the Provinces are discredited by the political Parisian power etc.*", So, I'm a citizen of the World with an accent, because I consider myself to be from somewhere, even though I adore Franche-Comté, were I live now. So, Trobéïrice, she did come at a certain time... She came at the same time, as I noted in this notebook, thus: she doesn't show up, one don't see her, she's very rarely represented. She's a shadow puppet with a kind of magician's hat and a childlike's plait. She has a lot of knowledge, but she remains always the child she once was. "*It was at this point that Trobéïrice appeared as a shadow puppet, ageless, with only a long nose, a little girl's braid held back by a bow and a big learned man's hat. In my drift, my hopelessness, she always comme back to show me the way.*"

It was also at this point that I met, here in Besançon, someone who introduced me to Chaos Theory: Michel Planat, a CNRS researcher at the Laboratory of Oscillator Physics and Meteorology in Besançon. We had organized meetings with physicists at the Fine Arts School. I didn't understand a word of it... I really didn't! Nothing at all! But, we were curious about each other worlds. Michel Planat is a very, very great man, who dealt with these chaos theories. And finally, we all ended up eating together and drinking glasses of rosé, one after the other, which may have made us a little drunk! I'm interested in Chaos Theory, but I don't understand it. I can't start being a physicist either. So that's how Trobéïrice was born, and she's with me now all the time... And, given the versatility of my work, Trobéïrice is like a metamorphosis character, allowing me to metamorphose myself into whatever and whoever I want. She goes from one Universe to another and is the unfailing link that binds all my Universes

together.

- PART 4/4 | [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

JPS: Now it's the fourth and final part. The two of us are lucky enough to be participating in a major exhibition at the Popular Arts and Traditions Museum in Champlitte. The exhibition is entitled "*Witches! Women's spells...*" and your work is perfectly suited to this subject matter, because you've been working on the female body and the women condition during all your life. I will present a large silkscreen print on paper : The Goddess *Ixchel*, she is the Mayan goddess, associated with Water and Death and I think it's going to be a very important and landmark exhibition... So maybe you'd like to show us some of your witch-related or magical works? Or do you want to talk about witchcraft? And how women bodies have been persecuted throughout all of mankind history? There have been a few matriarchal societies in Europe before, as we know, but they're pretty rare. So, as a woman, perhaps you could say something about that. We've already talked earlier about the situation of women and specially little girls in Afghanistan, where it's terrible! But these stories of witches who were persecuted, like Marguerite Porete who was burned alive for writing her her great and passionate book in the XIII<sup>e</sup> century: *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, that's terrible too!

CF: As early as at the School of Fine Arts, I had read Michelet's *The Sorceress*, and I was terrified by the fate meted out to these women. In fact, I tried to read it again for this exhibition, but I stopped, because I felt much more down emotionally than when I was 18. I mean, when I read this book, it was for my general culture. And there are descriptions that are so atrocious, that I stopped reading Michelet's book, which is an essential book to read. So I've always been interested and tormented by these stories about women condition, women burned alive etc. A while ago, in the 70s, before becoming a professor at the Fine Art School de Metz (1973 - 1977), I was at the Fine Art School of Paris (1971 - 1972) and I was somewhat involved in the the art scene. There were certain women who had emerged after 1968, who were very, very powerful at that time, and they had initiated a magazine called "Sorcières". They were very, very kind and attentive to me, very kind, but I felt out of place with these women. As it was a very elitist Parisian feminist milieu. They invited me to take part to their Art Magazine. I know they had invited me because they sensed in me this telluric force within my work in fact... So I was part of this adventure. After that, I became a teacher in Metz and I didn't go back to that milieu. Then, as I'm always interested by this subject matter, a few years ago, I saw a very big exhibition on witchcraft at the Musée des Archives Nationales in Paris, as I go to Paris a lot because I also live in Paris. There were some incredible documents, and I found myself in this kind of very strong emotional state, about the fate that had been reserved for all those poor women. There were a lot of documents from Haute-Saône... which were on loan from the department for this exhibition. That's when I realized just how many women were burned in this

specific area of France. And when I spoke to Caroline about it...

JPS : Caroline Dreux, which is the Museum Director?

CF: Yes, Caroline Dreux, who's going to curate this exhibition. She told me: "*Yes, we've lent some documents to the Nationales Archives*". And one thing led to another: Caroline knows my work for a long time. I showed her the magazine "*Sorcières*", which is currently at the museum, and in which I have two documents photographed. There's also an other document that will be in the exhibition. And when she asked me if I wanted to take part in the exhibition, I said yes, on condition that you didn't think of me as a witch. I'm a woman who wonders about witchcraft, but I'll never do evil spells or black magic. I am white magic. I can also testify, finally, to all the pain I feel, because most of these women were not great villains, they were poor women who had been denounced by their neighbours...

JPS : They were herbalists! Healers!

CF : They were bonesetters, herbalists, women who were certainly of great quality. The same as nowadays, it's unbearable that little girls are being poisoned in Iran and Afghanistan at this precise moment, just because they're going to learn at school! As soon as they felt they had a lot of knowledge, they tied them up, chained them up and burned them! That's unacceptable for me. So I said yes, I'm coming. That's why I'm taking part in this exhibition.

JPS: Thank you Claudie, we'll be waiting for you at the exhibition. And as we've known each other for a long time, you told me about your somewhat mystical experiences in Israel and Peru. Would you say a few words about that, please?

CF: That is to say that I'm a convinced atheist, I have no religion, but I'm always looking and seeking for... something meaningful. I've had a great knowledge of the Bible since I was a little girl. And I have always said to myself: one day, I'm going to go to Israel. And I was pregnant at that time, carrying my daughter, but I didn't know if I was going to keep her or not... You have to look at it like that! So I went to Israel, and since I knew the Bible inside out, I followed Jesus' itinerary. At one point, I was staying at a youth hostel in Capernaum, on the shores of Tiberias Lake. And I said to myself, I'm going to walk up to the Mount of Beatitudes, even though I was pregnant, but at the very beginning, and I'm going to look out over at the Tiberias Lake from up there. It was almost sunset, and it's true that I was in a kind of state of ecstasy... Despite the fact that I'm completely atheist!

JPS: Yes, you're not a monotheist, but you are animist in some way? Yes but things need to be precised!

CF: Yes, absolutely, I'm a pantheist, I believe in all the little gods and so on. I

believe in nature, I believe in streams, I believe in little things. This Jesus character, he's a character who certainly existed but, I was going to say, he's a bit like Che Guevara, the fool in the joke. And so, when I was up there, the landscape was so beautiful... The scenery was really gorgeous and impressive... And the silence... And then in my head, I thought: down there, that's Tiberias all the same. So in my head, I told myself some kind of story, and I was in a state of ecstasy... It was almost sunset, and it's true that I was in a state, in a kind of ecstasy...

JPS: A cosmic connection?

CF: I don't know what it was, but it felt good. And then, the funny thing - we always finally see the dark side of the story - was that when I went down, I walked to the lake shore, I crossed the border... And at that period of time, we could do that, it was long time ago, when Israel, was in peace. And on the way down, I came across a black dog that chased me. I climbed on a tree, and guess who called him back? It was some Palestinians who had tents and were camping there. So I was in this state where I said to myself, at the same time, there's this ecstatic state and then suddenly, out of nowhere the black gushes and bring you back to reality! Between the heavenly spiritual experience, flying, flying spiritually and there's always the terrestrial and purely material realities that bring you back to earth, reality always catches up with you. But at the same time, these Palestinians were very kind, they made me eat and they took me all the way back to Capernaum... So I experienced both this extremely mystical side and then, this furious dog that had come along to try to bite me.

JPS: Yes, the devil, some kind of?

CF: The devil... Or at least Reality. Reality arriving with the dog, you see? So all I had to do was take refuge and climb on a tree to save myself.

JPS: Claudie, thank you very much for this interview. Thank you for having us in your studio. And good luck with everything, have a great show! We'll see each other soon. A big thank to Lionel, who was filming behind the cameras, and good luck to all of you! Goodbye and see you soon.

CF: Thank you Jean-Pierre and thank to you Lionel, for being so patient!