



Von Heyl, 2018
Photo: Ralph Mecke

[von Heyl at Petzel Gallery](#)

[von Heyl at Corbett/Dempsey](#)

[BOMB Magazine](#) visited von Heyl in her New York studio in 2010 for a characteristically frank conversation about the medium of painting, German identity, and abstraction, as she edited a final mock-up of [her first monograph](#) and [an exhibition of new work](#) at Petzel Gallery, where she had [her first solo show](#) in 1996. “My paintings usually hide their traces and their own history. They have weird shifts where you don’t expect them, and at their best they will have an auratic presence despite themselves. It’s not about mystifying anything; it’s about lengthening the time of pleasure. Or torture,” reflected the artist. “I don’t want to make the painting, I want the painting to invent itself and surprise me.”

“It is a big part of me, this ferocious input of images,” von Heyl told her audience during a [2011 lecture at UCLA](#) about her process and inspirations in conjunction with her [exhibition at 1301PE](#) in Los Angeles. “[The] image clusters concentrate something and then implodes or explodes into another image cluster.”

In 2012, [Tate Liverpool](#) displayed 42 large canvases and a suite of works tracing von Heyl’s career chronologically in her first major exhibition in the UK. “I’ve always been about trickery. And I love it,” she explained in a [TateShots video](#). “What I want to happen is that the space between the painting and the viewer gets activated...the viewer forms a relationship with the painting and the painting almost hovers in front of itself, between the viewer and the canvas.”

[Watch von Heyl at work](#) making soft ground etchings, aquatint methods, drypoint, and chine collé, during a 2014 residency at [Crown Point Press](#).

In 2017, [von Heyl sat down with Even Magazine](#) in her studio in Marfa, Texas to talk about style, gallery politics, and what has driven her painting practice since childhood. “Neither the act of painting itself, nor the materials I’m using, nor the history of those materials, is in the least interesting for me. What interests me is how the painting, in the end, conveys a new image. Not in a classical way, not with a narrative, but a new image as such,” she reflected.

“Abstraction has actually a lot to do with...ambivalence. Abstraction is not only about ‘no-meaning,’ it’s also about imploding meaning. I like to have references to half-thought associations,” [von Heyl told The Brooklyn Rail](#) in a 2018 conversation about her recent sources of inspiration, technical experiments, and new work on view [at Petzel Gallery, New York](#).

[The Hirshorn](#) in Washington, D.C. and the [Deichtorhallen International Photography & Art Museum](#) in Hamburg organized the largest survey of von Heyl’s work to date in 2018, exploring the artist’s cerebral, inventive, and visceral output since 2005.

Fifteen new paintings made during von Heyl’s pandemic seclusion in Marfa, Texas were shown [at Corbett vs. Dempsey](#) in early 2021. She also debuted a mural commission as part of the [Worcester Art Museum’s Wall at WAM series](#), taking inspiration from Ellsworth Kelly for a 17 x 67 ft. painting on façade of the museum’s Renaissance Court.



Von Heyl, 2010 Photography: Fredrik Nilsen



Charline von Heyl (German, b. 1960)

Vel, 2020

Acrylic and oil on linen

Private Collection; L2021:3.1

Charline von Heyl describes her practice as one rooted in fetish: “the satisfaction that comes out of charging objects with something. Every object I see...anything that is handmade. Anything that has history.” Collecting such objects since childhood—including teacups, knives, and picnic tables—von Heyl frequently begins a painting inspired by her initial attraction to the visual qualities of a found, gifted, or purchased item. **Vel** comes from the artist’s recent series of paintings completed in the seclusion of her studio in Marfa, Texas. A patchwork of color and brushwork, the painting builds on von Heyl’s relationship with abstraction and the objecthood of painting, a dialogue she has spent her career conducting, from her training in Germany to her professional practices in New York and Texas. Though she identifies herself as a painter, von Heyl’s insatiable curiosity about art, color, medium, history, and style ensures a prolific diversity in her practice, which renounces neither figuration nor abstraction, and frequently ventures into drawing, woodcut, silkscreen, and lithography.

On view April 28 – August 1, 2021