



Charlotte

Charlotte tells the extraordinary true story of a young woman who uses her art to affirm life in the face of death. She has to face both the external demons that threaten her existence as an exiled Jew in occupied France, and the internal demons that arise from a family history of secrets and depression. She decides to paint her history, and in doing so, she—almost—conquers both.

Our film will be in the spirit of her painting: full of vibrant color, wit, irony, dynamism, unexpected angles of vision, extraordinary insight and unflinching truthfulness. Moving effortlessly between her painting life in Nice, and the past she is re-exploring in Berlin, Janice Margolis's beautiful and trenchant screenplay works as a series of love triangles. In Berlin we follow the course of Charlotte's infatuation for the eccentric genius who became her mentor and lover, her stepmother Paulinka's singing teacher Daberlohn; and in turn we follow Daberlohn's futile worship of Paulinka. In Nice we follow fellow-refugee Alex's affair with Charlotte's patron Otilie, and subsequently his friendship with Charlotte. It is in this last relationship that, having painted away her demons, Charlotte finally finds joy and contentment. In a powerful climax to the film she finally reveals to him the collection of paintings that tell her life story. Particularly she comes to terms with the loss and suicide of her mother, kept secret from her for much of her life. Charlotte and Alex marry, only for new life and hope to be cruelly snuffed out in the last horrible irony of the movie.

For all its tragic underlying themes, this film will be a pleasure to make. There are some very special parts here for our exceptional actors. Charlotte is beautiful, wilful, shy, difficult, full of demons, rage and hurt, and full of tenderness and gentle lovingness, both young and old before her time. Alex is a little older, handsome but scarred, a flawed man, damaged by his experiences of flight. He too has a major journey to make, from a man interested in saving his own skin to one who would risk his life for love. Daberlohn, the visionary genius without whom Charlotte might never have painted her life; Paulinka, the opera singer deprived of her audience; and Otilie, the American philanthropist, are also complex and interesting characters.

This is a universal story of a young woman struggling to find herself despite the lies and confusion of her life, and finding her artistry and her human connectedness in the process. Because of its wealth of themes, the film will be accessible and appealing to a wide audience. It will also be a visually beautiful and emotionally powerful film, both comic and tragic, in the spirit of Charlotte's own work, itself far ahead of its time.

Writer: Janice Margolis

Director: Paul Morrison

Producers: Carlo Dusi, Jonny Persey, Karen Johnson

Cast: Marcia Gay Harden, Debra Winger

Budget: €4,200,000

Production estimated to commence at the end of 2008