

THE WHITE ROSE

CAROLINE VON KROCKOW

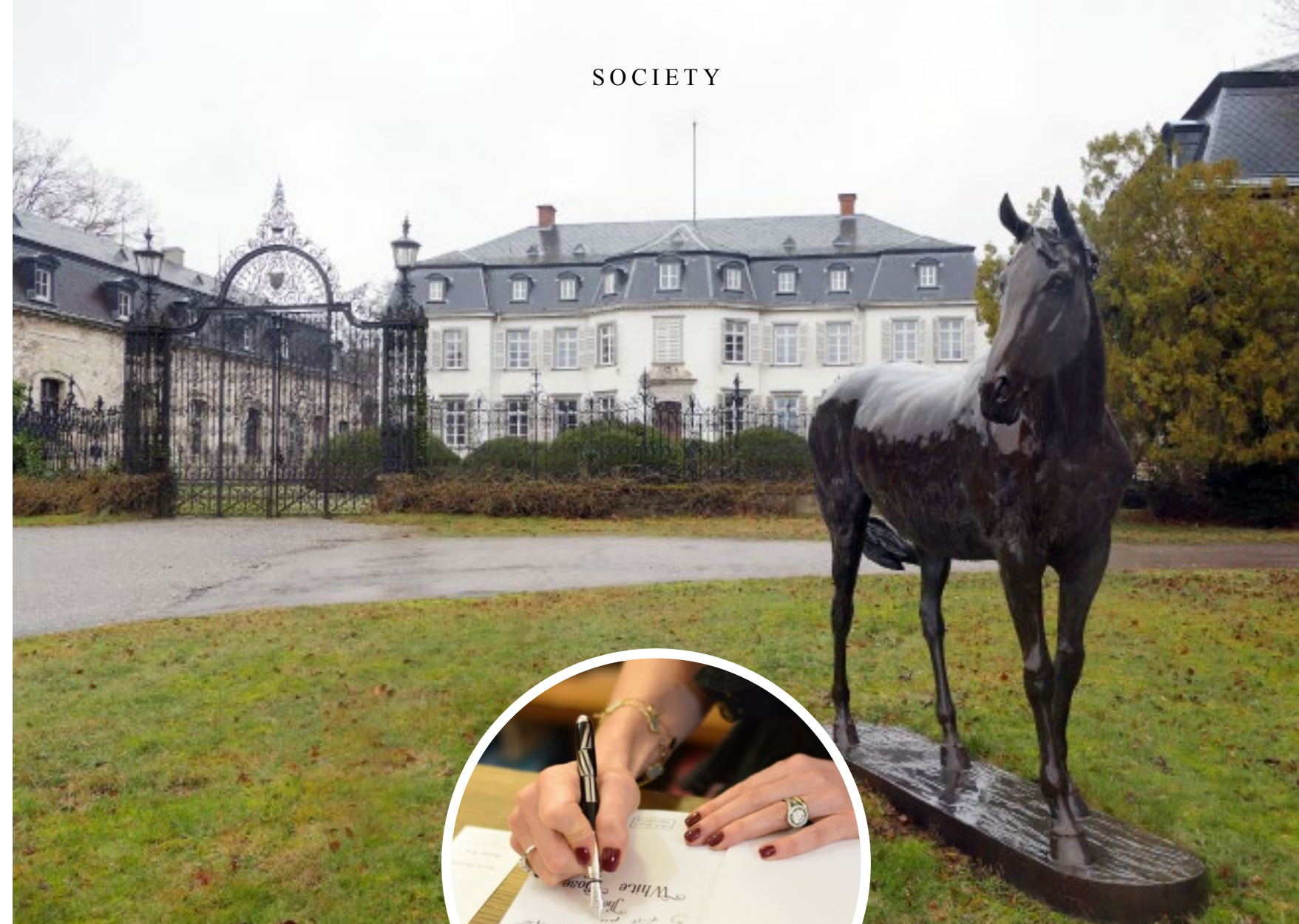
INTERVIEW BY CATHERINE McQUEEN



Caroline comes from an aristocratic, banking family named Sal. Oppenheim who are based in Cologne. A qualified lawyer and mother of 3 she has just completed her first novel, *The White Rose*.

SCHLENDERHAN

The family bank was founded in 1789. In 1869 her ancestor Edouard von Oppenheim bought the famous stud farm Quadrath-Ichendorf and the beautiful Schlenderhan Castle just outside Cologne. Caroline's grandmother Karin (born von Oppenheim) was very attached to the family's history, tradition and values. Karin transmitted her



humanistic values to her oldest granddaughter Caroline with love and patience. Caroline was baptized in Schlenderhan and has many happy childhood memories with her grandmother there. Caroline talks fondly of her grandmother to whom she was clearly close.

THE WHITE ROSE

Caroline's first book is a historical novel set over 2 time periods. She describes it as being 2 books in one. Vivian, an art history student living in London, comes across the diaries of Marie Anne, her great-grandmother who lived in a castle, much in fact like Schlenderhan, during the Belle Époque era. *The White Rose* itself is a painting, drawing on Caroline's great love of art, a subject that writing the novel gave her scope to indulge in. Her family were always big art collectors and so although she never actually formally

studied art she felt that through her surroundings she was studying it all the time.

Not that she doesn't love studying. A qualified lawyer Caroline has several degrees to her name including a Bachelor in History from Kings College London, a Masters in Media Communications from LSE and an MFA in Creative Writing.

WRITING

No stranger to writing magazine articles, she has written extensively on art and also Marie Antoinette for various different publications including *Cercle Magazine*. She found writing a novel a very different experience, "It took me 3 years to write *The White Rose*. There is no deadline. I could have gone on forever". Caroline had enormous pleasure in researching the Belle Époque and went through many archives to get to the bottom of this diverse period in history.

LAW

Caroline previously worked as a solicitor at Bird and Bird in London, specialising in Intellectual Property law. “Not a day goes past where I regret qualifying as a lawyer. It gives you a different way of looking at life and shows you a different perspective. It teaches you to think in a different way that is quite logical. I even managed to find some creativity within the law, namely soft IP law in the UK, which is less rigid than in Europe”.

WORK LIFE BALANCE

Like all working mothers it’s a struggle to balance work and home life however Caroline noted that Paris itself has been a great help in this aspect. To her this city makes things a lot easier for mothers. Most mother’s work whether they need to financially or not and there is the ability, without stigma, to send your child to a creche when you go to work from a very young age. It is considered quite normal to send your child to “La Gardarie” from the age of around 1 and a half. Instead of being criticised for doing this, mothers are rather criticised for not doing this as it is thought to encourage children to be sociable from an early age.



PARIS

Her new home city is a source of inspiration, she loves that she can attend art exhibitions regularly and the beauty of the city generally, now finding ugly cities all the more unappealing. Although she could not speak French when she first moved to Paris with her husband she was quick to learn as she knew, quite rightly, that knowing the language would give her a greater enjoyment of the city.

She misses the balls held in fairy tale castles in Germany but travels back to attend such events regularly.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Caroline has written several articles on Marie Antoinette. She finds her fascinating as a tragic historical figure who in fact was much misunderstood. “She did not mean unwell but she was so detached that things could come out wrong. She was too young, not educated enough and surrounded by the wrong people who gave her no guidance. When it was too late she had all these revelations”. Caroline is working on a historical novel about Marie Antoinette.



THE BELLE ÉPOQUE

There is some argument as to the exact dates of this era however it was generally thought to be between 1889 – 1900 although some stretch it to 1914. Caroline takes the former view considering 1914 to be more the Art Nouveau period. The Belle Époque is the time period during which The White Rose is set. It was a time of poverty and misery. Yet at the same time it was a rich and diverse period where women were able to have an indirect influence through their intellectual salons. Countess Greffuhle, who inspired Marcel Proust for example held such a salon and promoted artists and writers. Looking at Paris Caroline notes also that most of the architectural beauties of Paris as we know it today date from the Belle Époque. It was also a very international period where, during the various Exposition Universelle, the riches of the world were showcased. Caroline

finds it fascinating and it is an era she has researched well and reflected accurately in her novel.

The White Rose is available on Amazon as well as Caroline’s website <http://carolinevonkrockow.com> and in Paris at the prestigious international bookshop Librairie Galignani (224 Rue Rivoli) by Le Hotel Meurice. Galignani was the first English bookshop on the continent.

The White Rose is also available at Librairie Lardanchet Beaux-Arts, 100 Rue du Faubourg St Honore, one of the oldest and most exclusive art bookshops in Paris and the charming bookshop Tome 7, 81 Rue St Dominique, close to the Eiffel Tower.

