Steel, Silence & Soul – Luna Del Rey on Art, Absence, and Coming Home

Interview by Amira Feldmann | Art + Voice Magazine 12/2023

"People think movement is chaos. But it's geometry. It's pure sculpture at 150 mph."

Q: Luna, your work has taken you across continents, but it began in Germany. What do you remember most about your early years in Hamburg and Berlin?

Luna Del Rey:
Hamburg was where I was born, but Berlin is where I became. My earliest memories are the smell of wet stone in my mother's studio near the Elbpark, and later, the grunge of Kreuzberg and the clang of trams in Prenzlauer Berg. I was raised between unfinished sculptures and protest posters. My mother, Zola, was always working, always listening—to the city, to silence, to me. Berlin was gritty, but it had rhythm. It shaped me long before I understood what it meant to create.

At her atelier in Zurich

Q: Your mother, Zola Adeyemi, is an influential sculptor and professor. What was your relationship like growing up with her?

Luna:
Zola doesn't teach in the traditional sense—she embodies. Watching her has been the lesson. She holds space for pain, for beauty, for contradiction. I remember once, after a stone cracked the wrong way, she just looked at it and said, "It's still whole. Just in a new shape." That is her way. She is never dramatic, but everything she does has weight.

Q: Your father was Rory Gallagher touring Germany excessively, but he wasn't really present. Has it affected your path?

Luna:
Yes. His voice was everywhere—on the telly, radio, in the apartment—but he wasn't. More like watching a stranger sing lullabies you already knew by heart. I've had to make peace with the idea that someone can shape you deeply without ever being near. I didn't meet him until I was ten. It was in London in the hospital. He died that day.

Q: But you've spoken often about your stepfather, Uwe Liebermann. Tell us more about him.

Luna:
Uwe was the still point in my childhood. What most people don't know is that before he was a nurse, he was a race car driver. In his twenties, he drove for Porsche, alongside legends like Richard Attwood, Hans Herrmann, Jacky Ickx, and Hurley Haywood in the Porsche 935. He only ever said one thing with a trace of regret: "I never won Le Mans." But he raced with pride—and took on the Paris-Dakar Rally more than once.

"Art is nothing without edge."

Q: That sounds cinematic in itself. Did any of that rub off on you?

Luna: (laughs)
It did more than rub off. In my mid-twenties, between two installation projects, I took a

sharp left turn—literally—and did a precision driving course in Arizona. It was run by none other than Günther Steiner, former Haas F1 team principal, who was mentoring young talent at the time. With backing from Mercedes AMG America, I trained for months in high-speed handling, skid control, and drift choreography.

Q: Seriously? From sculpture to stunt driving?

Luna:
Why not? Art is body control. Art is timing. Driving, at that level, is choreography with machines. That training led me to work as a precision driver and stuntwoman in the CARS franchise—I doubled for live-action vehicle shots and even advised on the aesthetic realism of movement. It was bizarre, and so empowering.

Q: Did you ever want to follow Uwe into racing full-time?

Luna:
No. That world is beautiful but brutal. For me, it was always about understanding his language. Feeling what he felt behind the wheel. Honoring that part of him. After that chapter, I returned to my practice—with new reflexes, deeper breath, and a sense that even steel and speed can be part of tenderness.

Q: You studied in New York. What drew you back to Europe—specifically to Zurich?

Luna:
Zurich surprised me. It's quiet, but not dull. There's space to think. And being close to Italy… it means something to me now. My partner Luca was Italian. A filmmaker. He died of Covid in an ICU in NYC just three years ago. It was sudden, devastating. Zurich felt like a middle ground—a place where I could still feel him, but also begin again. It's where I grieved, and where I learned to breathe differently.

Q: Has your art changed?

Luna:
Yes. It's more elemental now. More honest. There's less need to impress—only the need to connect. And to let stillness speak louder than spectacle.

Q: If you could offer one truth through your work, what would it be?

Luna:
That we're allowed to live more than one life. That grief doesn't end you. It remakes you. And that even if you've crashed—sometimes, what rises from the wreck is the beginning of real freedom.

Q: Thank you, Luna.

Luna:
Thank you. For making space for contradiction.

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