

*A support scheme
for emerging creators of contemporary circus in Europe*



CircusNext

Odyssey

Translation of the video report

**Alexander Vantournhout
(Not Standing vzw)**

is "ANECKSANDER"

Creation Residency at Les Migrateurs (Strasbourg, FR)
October 2014

Translation © Agathe Curatolo & Gabrielle Martin Da Silva

Video ▪ Creative Commons License Delphine Maugars

Tragic autobiography of the body and extended mobility

Alexander Vantournhout: Aneckxander is a creation that talks about the body. It's a tragic autobiography of my body. This show is not very personal, but it talks about my own disproportions, so I work with my body's specificities, that is to say, my long neck, my forearms which are very wide compared to my biceps, and I influence them as well. Afterwards, I look for shapes: I can hide everything behind an arm, behind 2 arms, in other words, twist my body, but without any real flexibility, more like 'extended mobility'.

Jean-Charles Herrmann: Alexander's work is a very specific work. He now refocuses on his main tool, that is to say himself, his body. For an acrobat, it's often a kind of fundamental data: you have a body, you use it, as a tool, as an apparatus, except that Alexander doesn't go into the body's material dimension, but in what's right at the foundation. So it's both a physical work, very physical, but also an integration work, given that there are a certain number of themes that emerge from this work, like this issue of the body's balance, physical disproportions, compared to what he is as a human being. It is used in a very smart way, in order to focus on the circus body.



Prostheses

Through prostheses, objects, like Buffalo Boots for example, to compensate for my legs which are too short; first I'm going to use them as a disability, as a difficulty, and then I will use them as instruments, as extensions of my own body, that make it possible to perform figures beyond what the body can do. And these objects are highlighted because the body is naked, and instead of hiding the disproportions, they emphasize them. I'm always naked on stage. Same thing with the boxing gloves, same thing with the collar to hide my neck, and boxing gloves to extend my arms.

I think that the show is roughly written already. So in other words, I interpret written words. So when I come to the studio we have already created together what I'm going to do.



Purifying existing materials

The objective was not to have too much material. So all I have to do is purify them and enhance what already exist. Just purifying, still being there in the moment, refine the movements... there are lots of details. Physical language is very difficult to represent because you lose your senses' reference points a bit, first of all because I'm upside down, or in absurd positions, so your visual perception, your hearing, is disturbed, and so it challenges precision a bit. By doing so, you find slight variations that have to be captured. And then you can feel the precision in yourself, I think it's the same for the audience.

Residency at Les Migrateurs

Jean-Charles Herrmann: It's been a long time since we've been developing work in residencies, it's the heart of Les Migrateurs' project, and what we probably recognize as a very important thing in the idea of an artistic residency is finding the right schedule, finding fairness and balance in what we have to do in this residency.

Here at Les Migrateurs, it's the first residency that is really focused on the project. But I don't walk into the studio without thinking, without preparation. So everything was very well prepared, everything is minutely-executed.



The team

There are other people working, people who are more specific, one for dance, one for body language; there is someone, Geert Belpaeme, for theatre, so we worked a lot with him being here; next week Gérald Kurdian is coming, he's a composer, so we will look into music to see how we could be more.... Well, we only use one piece of music, *Variations for the Healing of Arinushka*, it's not very well known, it's by Arvo Pärt, there are six variations, and we try to write an acrobatic sequence that is very precise for the music. Each person works on a very specific topic. And at the same time, there is the costume maker that has to cover the whole show. It's often people I've met on my journey, that I like, like Bauke Lievens. She's a dramaturge known for *Un Loup pour l'Homme*. She's very important during the creation.

CircusNext

CircusNext is a great support. In Belgium, circus is not yet a language such as in France where it is at the same level as dance and theatre. It's very important to be acknowledged by an institution as such. On top of that, there is a network which is opening up, which is very very wide, and places to perform. Moreover, there are people who really thought about circus, who are more or less related to CircusNext. They are in the jury, they were artists themselves before, all the people I used to admire when I was young, they went through this. And so it opens up your prospects, you are spotted, it feels really good. It's a bit stressful because it has to go faster, you have to get results, up to now this journey was great for me, and it was at the right time in my life as well.



© Milan Szypura