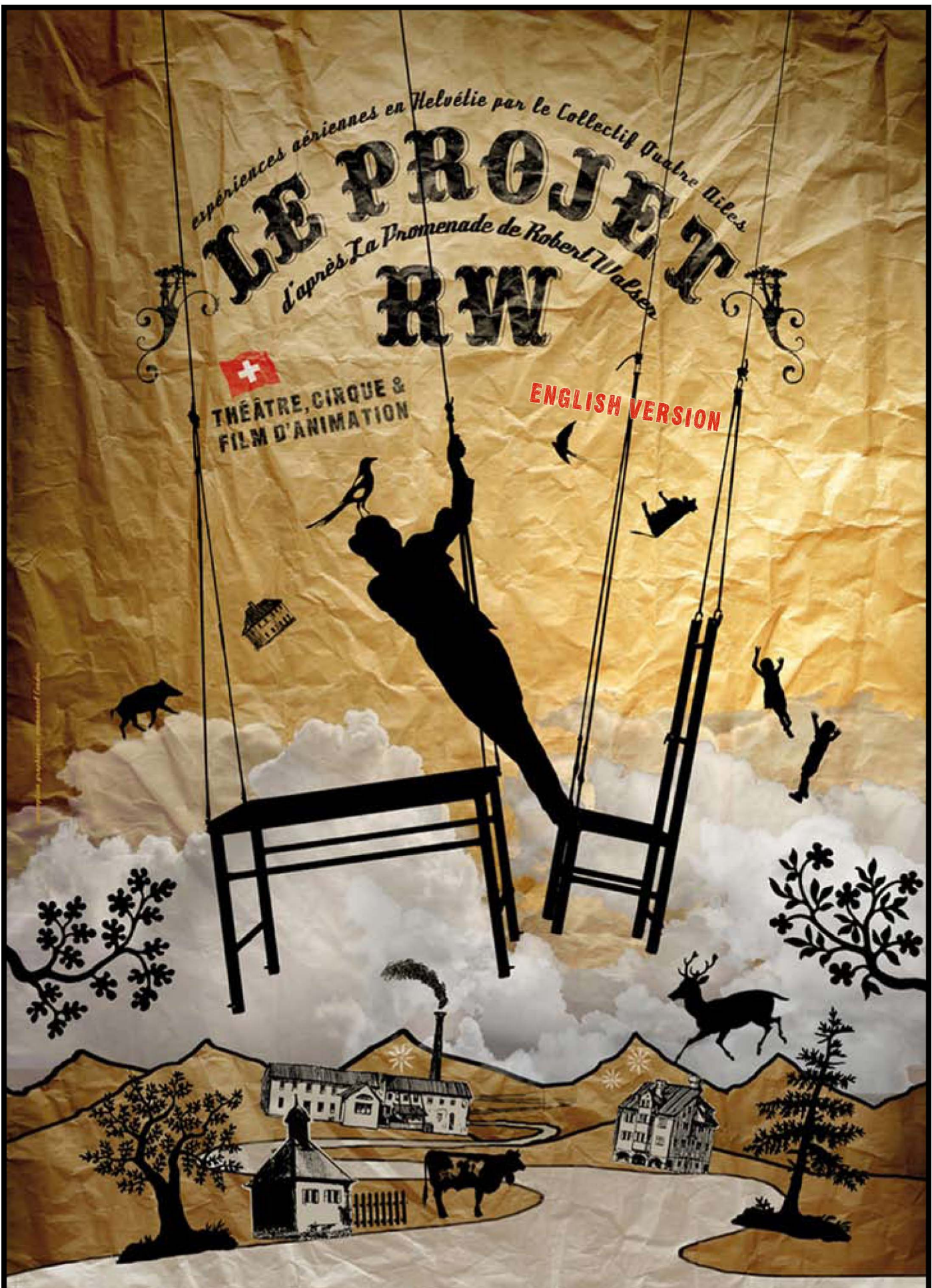


expériences aériennes en Helvétie par le Collectif Quatre Ailes
LE PROJET RW
d'après La Promenade de Robert Walser


THÉÂTRE, CIRQUE &
FILM D'ANIMATION

ENGLISH VERSION



Coproduction Collectif Quatre Ailes - Grange Dimière - Ville de Fresnes - Théâtre des Quartiers d'Ivry.
ARCADI (Action Régionale pour la Création Artistique et la Diffusion en Ile-de-France).
Avec l'aide à la création du Conseil Général du Val-de-Marne
et le soutien du CNAC (Centre National des Arts du Cirque).



GRANGE DIMIÈRE
Fresnes

Théâtre
des
Quartiers
d'Ivry

VAL de
MARNE
Conseil général

THE RW PROJECT

The team

Michaël DUSAUTOY - director & set designer
Annabelle BRUNET - video & graphic animations
Yannick DANTEC - drawings
Évelyne LOEW - theatrical adaptation
Cécile LAFFON - assistant director
Nicolas SÉGUY - original music
Marine BRAGARD - costumes

With

Damien SAUGEON - actor and trapeze artist
Claire CORLIER - actress
Marine BRAGARD - actress and singer
Olivier TURK - actor

Coproduction **Collectif Quatre Ailes, Grange Dîmière** - Town of Fresnes, **Théâtre des Quartiers d'Ivry** & **ARCADI** (Regional Action for Artistic Creation and Distribution in Ile-de-France).

With the production help of the **General Council of Val-de-Marne** & **National Centre of Circus Arts**.

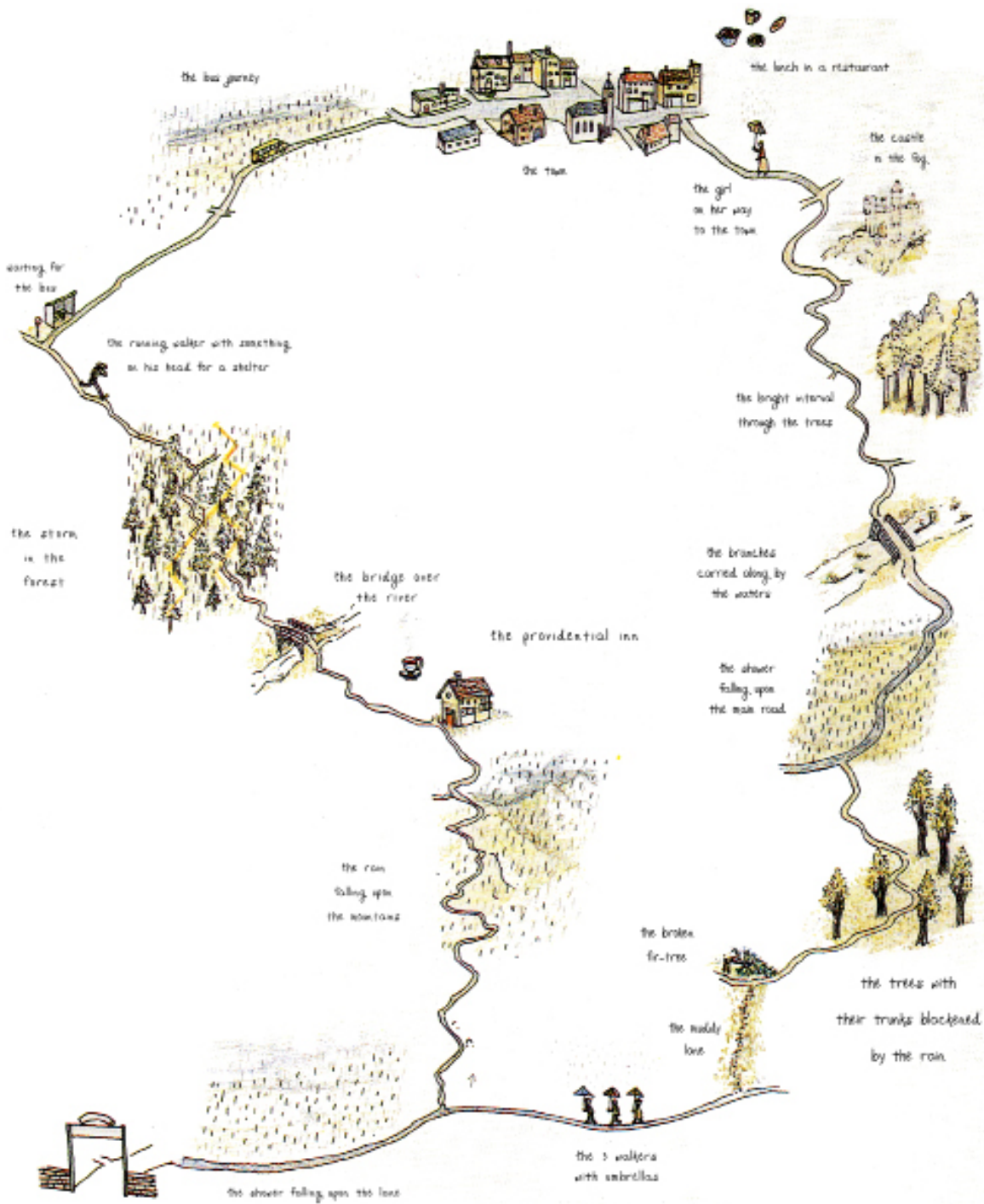
THE STORY

The Walk, is a short poetical journal, written by the Swiss writer Robert Walser in 1907, that gently and ironically describes the reality of the daily life in miniature.

One morning, a poet, a simple person yet with polished manners, goes out of his mansard and takes a walk.

Before his amazed eyes, in what he, himself, describes as «his own garden», from morning, noon and night, there come and go, in turn, the beauty of ordinary life, the silliness of conventions, the countryside, bewitching forests and mountains.

From one vignette to another, the poet jumps from one situation to another, and invites all those who are willing to follow him, to push the door of a fashionable bookshop, then defy an arrogant taylor-master, or conquer a terrible housewife, and even fall asleep on the moss of a little beech wood. Between the sharpest sense of discrimination and the purest philosophical thoughts, *The Walk* is a splendid sample of the art of this author, whose destiny was both fascinating and tragic, and who was so highly praised by such writers as Kafka, Thomas Mann, Musil, Canetti, Walter Benjamin or Claudio, among others.



For Robert Walser : *5th Walk*, Jean-Jacques Rullier, Incomplete Work, 1997, Cabinet d'Art Graphique, Georges Pompidou Center



« One morning as I was chewing over gloomy thoughts over a blank sheet of paper, I felt an urge to go for a walk. I put my hat on , and dropping the writing and the ghosts, I ran out of the room that I used for my work or fantasmagoria, and raced down the stairs.

On the landing, I saw a woman wearing an air of pale and faded majesty : I beg your pardon, are you Spanish, Peruvian, Creole ? Then I came into the vast, bright street.

The early-morning world that opened up before me looked so glorious that it seemed I had never seen it before. All I perceived provided me with a pleasant feeling of politeness, kindness and youth. I was ready for all that was to cross or brighten up my route. »

The RW Project, Evelyne Loew, adapted from *The Walk* by Robert Walser

Robert Walser and the Walker

The figure of the poet-walker echoes the life of his author and works. Robert Walser was born in Bienne on April 15th 1878, in a family of eight children. He was, on an emotional and artistic plane, in constant contact with his brother Karl, a talented stage designer and book illustrator, as well as with Lisa, his sister and a school teacher. In 1894, he lost his mother, a premature and decisive loss to him. At the age of fourteen, he left school to be apprenticed to a bank, then left home at the age of seventeen. As early as that time, Robert Walser stood apart from his brothers and sisters who already had careers, and had soon achieved to reach the social status they had always been yearning for. Drifting from one menial job to another, he was successively a bank clerk, an office worker, a book-shop assistant, or an insurance company clerk among others. Robert Walser also kept moving from lodgings to lodgings, and towns to towns, or people to people. He was always intent on performing his various functions in exemplary fashion. To be nothing more than a piece of obedience was also a means used by his characters in order to reach some form of freedom. His favourite function was that of a servant, which allowed him to get as close as he could to the banal and the minute, the recurrent patterns that are found throughout his works. Hence he could sink in some flawless contemplation in which things and situations, apparently minute, took on a new scope.

In 1898, at the age of twenty, he experienced his first literary success; his poems were published in the Berne newspaper *Bund*. His publishing adventure was to go on in Berlin where he met his brother Karl again in 1906 ; the latter illustrated Robert's first novel, *The Tanner Children*. It would be followed by *The Assistant* in 1908 which received quite an enthusiastic welcome. But in 1909, the publication of *Jakob von Gunten* was given a rather chilly reception. The book was a meteor in the German literary world. Robert Walser, once and for all, did away with the literary standards of the times. Putting his taste for the insignificant in his daily life, Robert Walser appeared shabbily dressed, refusing to wear his brother's neat suits. He was ill at ease with the elegant and sophisticated poets and artists. Unlike them, he preferred « the coarseness of nature » and was regarded by the Berlin literary society as an eccentric and a worthless man.

In 1913, exhausted by the general contempt for his work, he left Berlin to return to his native country and took refuge at his sister's, Lisa. At her place, later on in Bienne where he lived in a dilapidated mansard, he rediscovers his liking for the walk, the immersion in the Helvetic countryside and towns. Far from being just a form of idleness, the walk was at the heart of Walser's work, a fundamental element without which he could not write. The hand movement needed a physical effort before, an ever-renewed encounter with the outside. *The Walk* was published at that period. From 1916 to 1920 *Seeland, Masquerade and Other Stories, A Poet's Life and Comedy* were published. Then there was a let-up in publishing, interrupted with *The Rose* in 1925, the last book of his working period.

Cécile Laffon

In 1956, Robert Walser died on a walk in the snow after twenty-eight years in mental institutions. As soon as he arrived at the asylum, he definitely quit writing. Carl Seelig, his friend and legal guardian, provided an essential testimony confirming that, while there, he was still in full possession of his faculties, after having donned the costume of a madman in order to withdraw into, what he called, « the lower regions of his inner world ».



THE RW PROJECT

About the production

by Michaël Dusautoy

COLLECTIVE APPROACH

In order to put *The Walk* on stage, we took possession of the text like an object to rewrite it theatrically, visually and musically from the abilities and sensitivity of each of us. As all that we will propose, will always be a betrayal of the original work whose function is to be read, whether privately or publicly, we will assume the parodic quality of our rewriting and make a note of it so as to be free from *a priori*.

As Claudio Magris explained in *Utopy and Disenchantment*, **parody has not much to do with the destruction of the sacred, and irreverence ; it is a kind of homage, not an insult. First and foremost, it is a nostalgia for something inaccessible that can only be expressed indirectly, allusively. It is also a confession of one's own inadequacy in front of the masterpiece one intends to take off, and a means of distancing oneself from it.**

As with our previous productions, we improvised on the text from objects picked up at flea markets, so that *The Walk* could be told through us. Evelyne Loew, who is an authoress and playwright, saw to it that the entire work was consistent. So as to be as faithful to the spirit of the text as she could, she coordinated the writing of the dialogues and monologues by mixing Robert Walser's text with the best moments of improvisations.

FEET UP

Going along with *The Walker* is travelling through a floating and eternal world.

The Switzerland that Robert Walser described is pictured like an extraordinary garden, a kind of paradise before the Fall. It flashed on us that it was like Chinese prints where the spectator's imagination circulates through the empty spaces of the drawing. Walser, besides, described China (where he had never been to) like a far and unknown country « with enchanting outlines » or « a poetic and dreamy country ».

To guide the spectator through the « enchanting » and « poetic » world of *The Walk*, **we chose to work with an actor-trapezist.** Free to walk on the ground, put on his seven-league boots and fly, our Walker comes across people and things on suspended paths. It is also by means of the aerial quality that we try to reveal the state of grace that dwelled in him when he was writing, walking and crossing life, making do with very little.

EFFORTS

For Robert Walser, **the art of writing and walking is work**. Thus, the actor-trapezist in the part of the Walker has to play with the physical effort he needs to make figures, or heave himself up onto the apparatus. Together, we try to tell the spectator that the poet is a real worker and his work may sometimes take on pleasant or exhausting forms.

BOXED IN

« Children are celestial creatures, for they are always in a sort of heaven. Along the years, this heaven fades away from them. They fall out of childhood into the utilitarian, calculating and dry existence of adults » the Walker says to us.

The different characters met along *The Walk* are often prisoners of their human condition. To represent them, we drew our inspiration from the characters of Samuel Becket's plays; they are unable to extricate themselves from their state. For instance, the book-shop assistant moves in a Lilliputian book-shop, the woman bank-clerk is riveted to her desk for fear of falling, Mrs Aebi gives the impression of being imprisoned in a straitjacket, etc.

The actors had to draw the most part of their characters. They searched for traits among popular imagery, and commonplaces, in order to create figures or symbols featuring the different categories of trades they embodied.

LYRICISM AND ACROBATICS

All the actors take possession of the apparatus on the stage. The scenes should mostly take place above the stage. To better reproduce the Walker's many flights of lyricism, the words from the text, for instance, become trapeze numbers. Marie-Louise Audiberti, in her essay *The Still Vagrant*, compares the Walker to a sort of « acrobat of words » who throws words up in the air, in the hope that they may get the rhythm and lift up the sentence. Thus, we will take up the idea of acrobatics again on the apparatus, with more or less dangerous and complex numbers according to the lyrical intensity of the text.

THE BEDROOM

To design the scenography of *The Walk*, we started from the assumption that the Walker would be, at the same time, in his mansard, at the Croix Bleue Hotel writing, and in the landscape walking. From the mansard, we only retained the furniture essential to the writer's work, namely a **table and a chair** standing on the bare floor. In turn, these two elements rise into the air and turn into apparatus. Whereas on the ground they remind the walker that he is a writer, in the air they free him in order that he may set off on his journey through floating worlds.



The apparatus-table and apparatus-chair are present all along the show and enable the spectator to perceive the ambiguity between the inside or outside of the room. **Like vehicles**, both apparatuses are like *Little Nemo's* magical bed that allows the little child, designed by Winsor McCay, to travel during his sleep, from his bedroom to enchanted lands.

The stage space is just like the format used by the painters of Chinese or Japanese prints (oban format). To put this idea into practice, we built a **vertical stage frame**. The frame was cut out of paper, after a Chinese, Japanese and Swiss tradition. The naive motifs in it were inspired by the Swiss popular imagery. The main function of the frame is also to remind the spectator that the walking space is a little theatre in itself.

Within this vertical rectangle, a six-metre-long and four-metre-wide recycled Kraft paper screen includes the walking space. As the frame is mobile, it can be moved from front to back and set vertically or horizontally. The actors-trapezists can stand before, behind or over it, in turn.

Choosing paper as our material was important. We wished to establish a link between the sheet the walker is writing on and the screen the actors are silhouetted against. Paper, a poor material, fits in with Robert Walser's universe for it is a simple, ordinary and common material.



STORY BOARD extracts...



CROIX BLEUE HOTEL



THE STREET



MISTRESS AEBI



THE TAYLOR



THE MARQUESS IN HIS PARK



THE BOOK-SHOP



THE TAXMAN



FLIGHT

TINKERING WITH PICTURES

by **Annabelle Brunet**



The productions of **Collectif Quatre Ailes** are characterized by tinkering and surprise. The video picture, at the heart of each show, does not elude this approach, both recreational and experimental.

To be startled by the picture when it is everywhere, and when the digital tools you make it with, are getting more and more efficient, such is what is at stake in the **RW Project**. This project required designing a state-of-the-art control unit and integrating animation software, in order to allow the progression of the actor-trapezist towards the core of animated pictures, projected onto a crumpled kraft paper wide screen...

From digital pictures...

Digital technologies were the obvious solution to the mobile production of **The Walk**. In Robert Walser's short-story, the Walker keeps centering the landscape, cuts his route into stages, retraces his steps, and lingers on a detail, then sets off again. The walker does not let himself be overwhelmed with the sublime, for each thing, even the most insignificant is worth paying attention to. « In fact, any touch of paint, even awkwardly done, ravishes me, for the tiniest fragment of paint conveys to me, first, a sense of zeal

and ardour, second, an image of Holland » he says to us. Likewise, the video pictures with our aerial Walker intervene as many as anecdotal elements brought out by a close-up shot. The flexible digital treatment of the picture that can be re-centered, slowed down or enlarged at will, has allowed us to have the stage space where the actors move – the Walker and the real characters he comes upon - coexist with the imaginary of an ever-moving landscape.

...to shadow plays

If there is no denying that technology has played an essential part in the making of our pictures, yet the aesthetic of the show refers to the **pre-cinema** or the traditional **shadow play**. Thus, the walker comes upon several silhouettes, shaded or designed after the 1900 fashion; the hinged bakery sign starts off, its metal creaking, or else a velocipedist, his wheel turning into a clock tower upon which he gently alights... A game takes place between the actors' bodies on sight and their real shadows and, as always, the **graphic aspect** prevails over some form of realism.

For the shadow leads to a vaster imagination than most images that try to reproduce reality. And the technological picture already contains the part of mythical and fantastic imagination of the first « shadow plays ». Whatever our tools, we are always in search of putting our finger on a childlike aesthetic quality, as such can be found in George Mèlies' or Lotte Reiniger's movies (The Adventure of Prince Ahmed, 1956), More recently in the tales of Princes and Princesses, directed by Michel Ocelot, or even The Mysterious Geographic Explorations of Jasper Morello by the Australian Anthony Lucas.

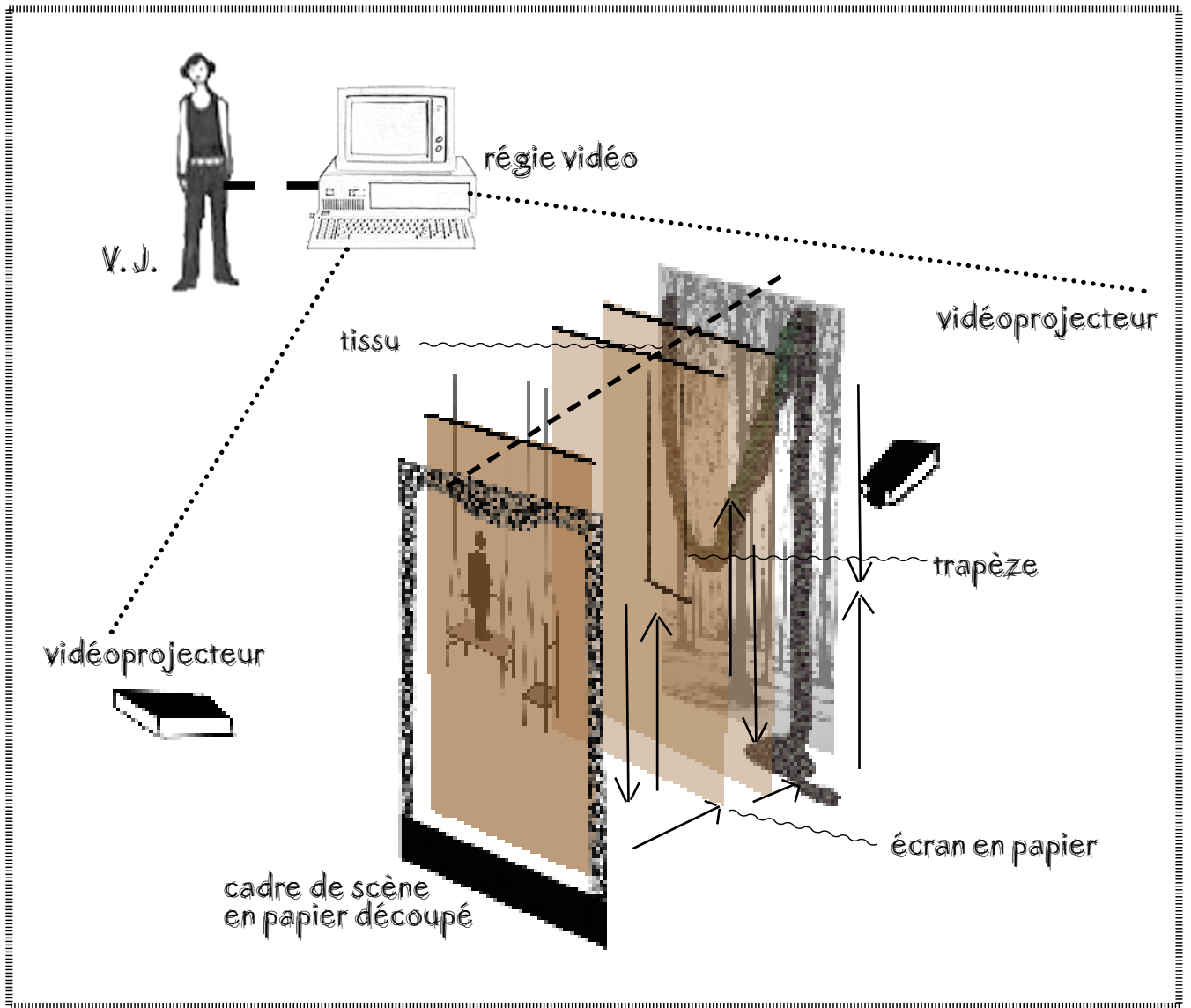


Light magic

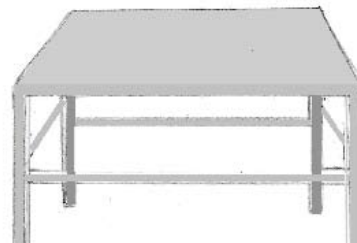
In the previous show, video was already like a little moving and shimmering theatre of paper puppets. The images of Sir Semolina, made by dint of refilming, printing, enlarging, cutting out and pasting, and finally incorporated into the culinary universe of the show, looked like an animated stained-glass window. Very close to the electronics-aided tinkering of Jean-Christophe Averty, with glittering and splashing-over colours, the prologue and epilogue of the show open and close a little window on the story being told...

This light magic is at the center of The RW Project, even if there is a fairly complex system. Like lighting, the video picture becomes a stage component. And the video control manager, as such, becomes another actor. Putting the collective approach first, it seems quite natural to us that this new « image show » should be included in other more conventional components that make up theatre. More than a prelude, an interlude or any animated setting, video puts itself on stage and the show is made up, as much as with the images as with the actors; the latter being taken by surprise, then improvise on the images.

DEVICES



agrès chaise



agrès table

THE TEAM

MICHAEL DUSAUTOY

Director, video artist, set designer, actor

He created video sequences to be shown during performances *Pantagleize* by Michel de Ghelderode directed by Philippe Awat, *La poche Parmentier* by Georges Perec directed by Karen Fichelson, *Hilda* by Marie N'Diaye and *Address Unknown* by Kathrine Kressmann Taylor, directed by Elisabeth Chailloux. Founder of the Collectif Quatre Ailes, he designed the set and performed in *Suzanne and Sir Semolina*. He has also been assistant director of Xavier Marchand and Eric Garmirian, and directed *Yvonne, Princess of Burgundy* by Witold Gombrowicz for the group «Le Zèbre à Bascule» (The Rocking Zebra Company) and he has played with Chloé Caillat and Philippe Bégué.

EVELYNE LOEW

Authoress

She joined in 1977 the famous french teatrical group «Théâtre du Campagnol» founded by Jean-Claude Penchenat of whom she was her assistant-manager and assistant-director on 45 shows. She was co-author of *Le Bal* adapted in cinema by Ettore Scola in 1983 and nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Published in France, she wrote many plays like *Marigold*, *L'Ange Araokatao* (The Araokatao Angel), *Zoé*, *Gorki/Tchékhov/1900* (ed. Actes Sud-Papiers) or *Le Procès d'un grand rêve* (Trial of a big dream) (ed. Champtin). For le Collectif Quatre Ailes, she has worked on the dramatic art of Sir Semoule. She has also written more than eight plays staged and performed by professional companies.

CECILE LAFFON

Playwrights

Co-author of *Suzanne and Sir Semolina*, she is one of the founder members of Collectif Quatre Ailes. She was Jean-Pierre Nercam' assistant director for *Slave Island* and *Harlequin, refined by love* by Marivaux and *Terre* by Catherine Lamagat. She adapted for the theatre *Lysistrata* and *Assemblywomen* by Aristophane.

ANNABELLE BRUNET

Video artist, doctor of Plastic arts

For the Collectif Quatre Ailes, she realised with Michaël Dusautoy video sequences to be shown during performances *Suzanne* and *Sir Semolina*. Then she was in charge the video control for the *Sir Semolina* tour, and very recently for *La poche Parmentier* by Georges Perec directed by Karen Fichelson. She exposed hers interactive installations in Germany and in France. She taught plastic arts during tree years at the Rennes University. Her thesis defended in 2007 and supervised by Anne-Marie Duguet, deals with the relation between video art and German Expressionism and theatre.

YANNICK DANTEC

Web designer, graphic, painter

He keeps carrying out pictorial experiments on various objects (furniture, clothes...) and has been working for several years on flash animation in order to develop his own universe fraught with naïvety and derision. Since 2005 he has been collaborating on the projects of le Collectif Quatre Ailes and is also the creator of its website.

NICOLAS SEGUY

Author, composer, and performer

He is the composer and performer of the music for *Sir Semolina*, and joined le Collectif Quatre Ailes in 2002 by taking part in the sound creation for *Suzanne*. He is a member of *La Famille*, a filmmaking-group headed by the director and actor Jacky Ido. In 2002, he released his first rap record *S Petit Nico*. Then he met the slam poetry performer *Grand Corps Malade* and directed the latter's first record *Midi 20* released by Universal in 2006.

PERFORMERS

DAMIEN SAUGEON

Actor, trapezist artist & stage director

He is one of its founder members of le Collectif Quatre Ailes. With them, he played in - and was also the director of - *Sir Semolina*, and also played in *Suzanne*. He performs on the fixed trapeze and the tissu with Pénélope Hausermann. He has taken part in the following shows, *The Suspended Cabaret*, *Laziness* and in the second *Sleepless Night* in Paris on the site of the 2r2c company. He has played under the direction of Jacques Albert-Canque in *Andromaque*, *Sur les pas d'Hölderlin* (In Hölderlin's Footsteps), *Sept couronnes pour Goethe* (Seven Crowns for Goethe), *Elvire Jouvet 40* and *The Blacks* by Jean Genet. He also leads art practices workshops for children and adults.

CLAIRE GORLIER

Actress

Within le Collectif Quatre Ailes, she has co-led the direction of actors on *Suzanne*, plays Moritz in *Sir Semolina*. She has also played in *Croisements*, *divagations* (Crossings, ramblings) by Eugène Ionesco and *Notes de cuisine* (Notes on cooking) by Rodrigo Garcia, both plays directed by Jean-Pierre De Giorgio, and *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, directed by Jean-Marc Fick. After having attended several courses and workshops about performing, improvisation, the voice, the *comedia dell'arte* and the clown, she has studied the character creation and the technique of the blank face mask according to Jacques Lecoq's teaching method.

MARINE BRAGARD

Actress, singer and costume design

A trained costume-maker, she has worked with Philippe Guillotel, created the costumes for several short-films and the shows *Suzanne et Sir Semolina* of le Collectif Quatre Ailes. In 2002 with Sandrine Cancellieri et Youlia Zimina she wrote *Lesson N°1 : becoming emancipated...* a humorous musical show by Mômes Printemps in which she sang a large repertoire of realist songs about the status of women in society.

OLIVIER TURK

Actor

A trained actor who, after following different training courses on theatrical practices with Solange Charlot, Bertrand Delloche et Gérard Lefèvre, has worked with Jean-Marie Songy and Michèle Berg with a street-theatre company (Cie Turbulences), has taken part in workshops on theatrical research led by the Aubervilliers laboratory, with François Verret (choreographer) et Nikolaus (clown). An actor and musician in most of the creations of the Cie Craie, headed by the director and authoress Claire Rengade, he is also the founder, director and actor of the Cie Pantoum, and has notably staged *Two* by Jim Cartwright as well as *The Great Disaster* and *La Mastication des Morts* (The Mastication of the Dead), by Patrick Kermann.

PRESS REVIEW

LE MONDE 2: THE NOVEL COMES ON STAGE

WHEN SONG AND CIRCUS INTERMINGLE - November 2008

"Michael Dusautoy directed and designed the RW Project based on the short story La Promenade (1907), famous poetic journal on life as it goes, written by a Swiss stroller, unjustly ignored in France, Robert Walser. Circus and Shadow Theater are standing out. » "

LE PARISIEN

AERIAL EXPERIMENTS IN HELVETIA – November 2008

"The group's artistic innovators Collectif Quatre Ailes recounts with humor the day walking of a writer who, over the meetings he does, assesses the beauty of the world and its little details. »

DIRECTSOIR

THEATRE EXPLORING THE REALMS OF POSSIBILITY - December 2008

"Enticing show, the RW Project convenes song, animation, Shadow Theater and circus, with a musical atmosphere created by Nicolas Seguy (composer among other of Grand Corps Malade)."

TELERAMA

A WALK BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH - December 2008

"A singular, poetic and committed, fragile and pregnant universe, which matches beautifully with the text of the poet."

FRANCE INTER – Studio theater

YOU CAN MARVEL, HOW OLD YOU ARE – December 2008

The Collectif Quatre Ailes' creation is a small bubble of champagne that bursts with humor and sensitivity. » "

AVANTAGES

AERIAL POETRY OF THE RW PROJECT – December 2008

"A magical show or how little things can become great wonders».

PARIS.FR - December 2008

"Clever mix of genres, the show takes us into an enchanting world. For the great pleasure of the audience "

LES TROIS COUPS

A SENSORY EXPERIENCE OFFERED TO THE AUDIENCE - December 2008

"Prestidigitation, dance, acrobatics ... a pure dreamlike atmosphere.»



C O L L E C T I F
**QUATRE
AILES**
THÉÂTRE IMAGES CIRQUE

BP 34 94201 Ivry-sur-seine cedex
Contact Estelle Delorme
estelle.delorme@collectif4ailes.fr / +33 6 77 13 30 88
www.collectif4ailes.fr