

Les Voyages

Compagnie XY



Les Voyages Exp. 2 / Alès, quartier Rochebelle, Juin 2018.

Cie XY's original approach to public spaces

He took one step at a time without knowing where he would place the next. As he turned the corner, the wind swirled up the dust and its greedy mouth engulfed the space in its entirety. He started to run, hoping to take flight from one moment to the next, but the cobblestones by the river bank were slippery and his flailing arms could not keep him upright. As he fell he understood that he was heavier than his dream and in that moment he loved the weight which had toppled him.

PIERRE REVERDY : THE TASTE OF REALITY (1915)

BEGINNINGS

Since becoming a large team with the creation of their show "Le Grand C", Cie XY's artistes have become totally intrigued by the arena of the public space and always by different artistic ways of approaching connections through performance, going beyond the confines of a theatre.

For over a year now, a group of around twenty acrobats has been meeting regularly to nurture this desire and brainstorm together, testing out in the field different forms of public encounter with this non-audience (those working or living in the space), and to establish protocols of action and movement in small groups ('commandos') and also large numbers. "Our aim is to find out how the language of acrobatics can infiltrate a public space, a building, or a neighbourhood and play with its physical constraints. To create a moment of otherness, an emotion, in order to present an alternative view to the men and women passing by."

In the words of Olivier Comte, who accompanies us on this adventure, it is "a slight disturbance of reality".



Les Voyages Exp. 1 / Valenciennes, quartier Rochebelle, Juin 2018.



VOYAGES, A REVERSED IMMERSION

Olivier Comte (les Souffleurs commandos poétiques)

Immersion, from the Latin *immersio*, as an astronomical definition, means the entrance of one planet into the shadow of another. We could define the transition at the start of a performance in the same way. An immersion. The theatre audience are plunged into darkness while light floods the stage.

In the theatres, in the big tops around the world, every evening, a planet enters into the shadow of another with the secret hope of a dazzling experience. The XY are familiar with this light which plunges the other into the shadow. So when the XY came to talk to me about their desire for poetry, for fragility, for public space, I thought : Here are acrobats who surpass their fear of an accident to tackle the accidental. This is what the street is. A permanence of the accidental. The great comings and goings of the world...

that we must render poetic with tact and finesse. With the silent fluidity of swallows. Without trestles or stages. So this is Voyages, with all the would-be ambition of a reversed immersion. Enter, not the shadow but the city lights. Enter, not the half-light of a theatre but the light of an adventure. And see small encounters become great meetings. Voyages, where artistes and strangers can build a fleeting but bespoke structure in silence together, the fundamental cement of which would be a pure, contemporary feat: solidarity. In *solidum*. Fragility, as an element solidifying a collective masterpiece. A sentimental building. A unique adventure.

CARRIERS OF MEMORY

We were in the street one day and we gently started to lift and carry strangers. This experience allowed us to reach into the emotional memory of each person. We all have a shared experience of having been carried from infancy ; the feelings of being carefree, of trust and peacefulness still resonate in our memory. How long has it been since we were carried? Our aim is to take someone's weight in our arms, and to take them on a deeply moving journey into their own memories. Going further, we believe that these personal memories will in turn reveal fragments of a collective memory ; a market square, a neighbourhood or a place loaded with stories in which we hope to play our part. It's also evident that dialogue with cultural operators and other local organisations will determine the best space and time in which to create what we call our 'sensitive structures'.

Les Voyages Exp. 1 / Vieux-Condé / Condé-sur-Escaut / Fresnes-sur-Escaut, Mai 2018



SENSITIVE STRUCTURES

We use the term 'sensitive structures' because we are continually pushing ourselves higher and further. We are building, though our aims are entirely different to those of builders. To the mineral substance of the urban environment we bring flesh, life, our own bodies. Faced with the impassive immobility of a building we add movement, motion and a certain vulnerability. Alongside that which is durable and permanent we present the ephemeral. For us, it is about understanding the view that the townspeople have of themselves (or how you should behave) and, for a moment, making people see things differently, and beyond what is visible. In each test site we first of all look at the particularities, unique features and other quirky details of the site, then together

we look at how we can infiltrate this urban space, how we can physically dress it or redesign it. So that a church, gargoyles, a stone bridge, or a tree in a market square can become a source of inspiration and material which feeds into our acrobatic and choreographic research. We bring into play the forces which define a form. From this balance of power, we are able to draw out what is sensitive and potentially beautiful. In this way a routine daily commute or an ordinary stroll can be transformed into a real 'voyage'; a visual or sensory experience, a rediscovery of the forgotten treasures all around us.

Les Voyages Exp. 12 : Chalon-sur-Saône, quartier Espace des arts et centre-ville. Octobre 2021.



LEAVING A MARK, A MEMORY : SOMETHING MORE PERMANENT

Finally, it seemed crucial to us, and integral to the 'Voyages' project to leave a trace of our activity. Although for some travellers this experience may prove to be something which lingers long in the memory, the process itself is short lived. For this reason we will be working closely with photographer Samuel Buton who will capture the highlights, immortalising these unique moments thus allowing the places who hosted us to design a photographic retrospective, following methods defined each time together with the photographer.

samuelbuton.com



Les Voyages Exp. 4 / Aljezur / Odeceixe / Arrifana / Monchique (Portugal), Mai 2019



Les Voyages Exp. 9 Festival La Strada / Graz / Stainz / Weiz, Juillet 2021 - Crédit photo : Fabrice Dimier

WORDS FROM ARTISTES

We've ventured outside!

Pushed open the door, stepped outside....where it's cold, or hot, or windy or rainy... there, where there is a rush of real light and fresh air. We step outside and already get blown away. It's so immense. Our bodies and acrobatic language are like pathways for strangers wandering off-track for an instant in playful connivance, to be invited on a journey that relies on their presence to exist, but about which they know nothing. We seek the sensation of vertigo... which propels and sways, clinging to each step we make into an unexplored land. A mysterious territory of encounters and glances where subtle silence and gracious gestures allow us to explore the gravity that binds us together as well as the weightlessness into which our journeys hurl us! One foot outside and the heart at the core, to carry once more.....

To carry, to transport, going beyond a simple encounter, becomes the driving force behind our exchanges, like a profound need anchored in each of us. To feel carried or, rather lightened, of our adult lives, so weighed down by responsibilities, to bear our pain and build our world. A need to feel lightened, if only momentarily along a few metres of pavement in a purely physical, non-verbal, non-intellectual, non-reasoned way..... A moment suspended in time that takes us back to the vulnerable child hidden in everyone who, not yet bowed by burdens, indulges in being carefree. The child who may not assume the whole weight of his or her life but tries to do so without fear because he or she can be picked up, carried, and hugged, swept up away from the ground by the reassuring and attentive gestures of adults, shielding the child from the "gravity" of the world! The resurgence of this vulnerability, so instant, instinctive, and carefree will inhabit us. We will be

benevolent overseers and vanguards of this memory and get reacquainted with this vital disequilibrium. We will be awash with this emotion, permeated by it...and each of us will find their place along the journey, sometimes lighter, sometimes grounded, a sensitive host, moved by the weighty emotions of the traveller. The simplest, most ancestral and original form of what will later become an acrobatic gesture is that very first encounter the newborn child experiences after having screamed its arrival into the world: being placed on its mother's stomach or being carried in its father's arms, where abandonment and dependence reign. We consciously rediscover these emotions within our adult reality. If the traveller's first reflex is to put on his or her armour, withdrawing to a symbolically charged, physical distance from the unknown, our challenge is to transcend fears and to foster a more fluid exchange, establishing trust in the community. When words like "safety, autonomy, control, innovation, investment" are nurturing our social perceptions of success, we experience imbalances, interaction, a letting go. To the ancestral, to the instantaneous, as if to give magnitude to our existence by experiencing antagonists... we propose a kind of retreat, to allow us to live an emotional revolution, to feel trust in community relationships and to rediscover the power of buried innocence. It is important to break away from the idea of "social interaction", so that we let ourselves live joyfully and simply, within human relationships. We already have one foot outside... And the other one will follow soon enough!

GUILLAUME SENDRON



We are strangers....and yet....

A moment of abandon in the arms of a smiling stranger? The people who become players with us in "Voyages" are locals. By passing through, we lend them an ear, give our presence...elements we struggle to offer in our daily lives, so swamped by time commitments. In a society of sometimes extreme individualism, experience a sigh, a suspended moment, a "journey" proposed by a group of individuals who will devote their time to others.....with such kind generosity!

"The very first look. The one that triggers everything, the start of the journey....How to capture it, to approach it, not let it slip away and hold on to it with the finesse of a giant on a spider's web? The one that conjures up unexpected bonds, that makes us realise that all is not lost. We walk together along a small stretch of pathway made up of the minutiae of daily life and we give them another look. Those small details that might well have fallen by the wayside had we had not offered them to each other."

ALICE NOËL



ABOUT CIE XY

Philosophy

For 17 years, Cie XY has been investigating and exploring the language of acrobatics through the practice of lifts. While relying on the fundamentals of this circus technique, this collective of artistes keep playing with the codes, rhythms and forms of acrobatics to put them back at the very heart of the artistic gesture.

Since then, the company has chosen to work in large numbers in order to multiply possibilities and to enlarge its field of research. This choice also reflects an artistic approach that aims to question the concepts of mass, of the "audience" and their interactions in the same space-time. Beyond that, it remains a matter of questioning the relationship of an individual to a group or within a given social setting.

Through this approach, Cie XY has also chosen to be a true collective, sharing the expertise and ideas of each individual and by adopting a collegial creative process. This constant desire to be part of a process of transmission and sharing in a non-hierarchical framework, has a strong impact on daily work and becomes a direct component of the artistic forms that are produced. In this spirit, the team has chosen to turn towards the public through the collective creation of large-scale forms for the theatre, public spaces or any places that allow frontal or circular performances.



OUR STORY SO FAR

In 2019, **Möbius** was the fifth creation of Cie XY, questioning humanity as part of a larger whole of the living world by analogy to murmuration, that incredible phenomenon of synchronised flight where each member of a group reacts almost simultaneously, as if they were one being. >>> [The teaser here](#)

Prior to that, in 2005, with **Laissez-porter** we wanted to rally together around our discipline, our expertise. It was an opportunity to test our foundations.

With **Le Grand C**, in 2009, we began to feel our way, with a feeling of the unknown as we worked with many artistes. The show was thus tinged with solemnity and sobriety.

It's not midnight yet... in 2014, finally allowed us to expand our performance space and to joyfully include dance, play and musicality...

Les Voyages in 2018, we embark on a creative approach in situ with the ambition to invest a territory and its landscapes using our bodies as the only material, with, as our standard the word «carry» , allowing us to reinvent a universal gesture through our actions. >>> [view the multimedia creations here](#)

All these creations together weave the fabric of a collective of artistes united around their common passion for performing acrobatics and composing singular forms.

The success of our previous shows - more than 1000 performances

around the world – has created opportunities for unique research on physical language and the universes we are likely to compose for the public.

In 2016, for the first time in its history, Cie XY received the support of the Ministry of Culture (Cerni).

Since then, the collective has continued to grow and become a platform for cooperation in which artistes develop new acrobatic experiences within the various creations.

They have also been able to extend their work on transmission within the framework of master classes at the Cirque-Theatre d'Elbeuf (2017) or by investing in a long-term cooperation programme with Palestinian circus schools (2016-2018).

The collective is now nearly 40 acrobats- strong, 19 of whom perform in Möbius, the creation that remains at the heart of the company's work and philosophy.

Since 2017, Cie XY is associated, for all its projects, with the Phénix-Scène nationale of Valenciennes as part of the Pôle européen de création and with the Cirque-Théâtre d'Elbeuf - Pôle National Cirque in Normandie.

Since 2021, Cie XY is associated with the National Dance Theatre, Chaillot and the Espace des Arts, Scène nationale of Chalon-sur-Saône. They also receive the support of the BNP-Paribas Foundation, since 2016.



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Création

XY Collective

Outside eye

Olivier Comte

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Production

Compagnie XY

Coproductions

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Residences

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