



Circus is for us an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Many artists from different disciplines have expressed this in their works. Painters, musiciens, cineasts and architects... each of them did live their „own“ circus.

Their work lets us share their love for circus. Fascinated by the imagination provoked by them, we live through them our own circus.

What is the circus itself beyond all its different interpreted forms? Is it possible to (re)discover it, not through the image we have of it, but through our own instantaneous common experiences?

Cirque

A tent skin, the stage in the centre, in the round 350 spectators, a story, one musician, one instrument, three circus artists and the element of light- each part has it's own form. When the performance begins, together they become the story itself....

The Story

Inspired by Henry Miller's short story
The smile at the foot of the ladder

August is ambitious, successful and popular. He "wanted to endow his spectators with a joy which would prove imperishable"- but he fails. His attempts to find himself as someone else turn out to be impossible.

The consequences are tragic. Balancing precariously between self -deception and disappointment, lies and desperation, August realizes that, in order to be happy, he can only be himself - no one else.

August frees himself from the utopian idea that happiness can only be found somewhere else; in another person, under other circumstances, in another form.

As we listen to, or read Henry Miller's story, we observe and absorb the story from the outside

When the artists themselves tell the story, they speak from experience of the circus world ; They put into words their own art - acrobat, clown, juggler or high-wire artist.

Their words shed a new light on their work. The story itself becomes authentic and understandable for us. It reminds us of our own story and it stretches to become ours. Our view then shifts: from the outside to the insight.

The Circus Artists

"There is nothing in the least illusory about these creations of his. Their reality is imperishable."
Henry Miller



Their work draws from a reservoir of "Non-Sense". Only this senseless physical self-evidence reveals the "truth": they enter the stage with nothing but themselves; they are self sufficient and so essentially contradict the accepted principles of order because what they do is not "efficient": what use is it to walk a tightrope...?

....what nonsense, wanting to fly in a little ship - despite this SKY SELA lives out her dream, which is not a dream of escape. She wants to fly, she wants to sweep the depths, to touch the ache that is joy. She wants to break through the roof of the tent with her ship to be part of this world, not to leave it behind, but to try her wings.

...what sense does it make to high-heel over a metal rope in an evening dress
AYIN DE SELA is upheld by the wire that defines her movement.
What could that be other than perfect?
How could the balance be anything but vital?

...is it the objects that move the people or do the people move the objects? MADRS ROSENBECK looks at both himself and his objects with amazement. He follows the movement of his juggling clubs and his own movements simultaneously. What comes first, the clubs or the hands, or are they the same? Not a hero defying gravity. Only wonder, following agitation.

The Music

SEBASTIEN APERT composed original music with instruments invented by the Baschet brothers. With these sound sculptures the percussionist curves and tempts the sounds to perfection, by hitting, rubbing, scraping, like an echo from the beginning of time.

The Circus Tent

The sail-makers were the first to build tents. Anchored by two poles our tent shelters 350 spectators from the rain, the wind and the sun. An ephemeral site, a fugitive hour. We're never sure if we're on board a ship cleaving through lost memories or if we're being gently propelled into the present.

Cirque

Cirque - a meeting : literature, music, artists and audience in the circus.

A circus made up of artists, the „travelling folk“ and the audience. This project is dedicated to the audience, without whom it could not, would not take place. The audience create the event. Without the audience the artists space cannot be discovered. Because of the authenticity of the artistic performance in the intimate round of the circus tent, audience and artist "touch each other". Their experience becomes one. It is as if they have recognized each other - those who live it and those who look for it



Production

Aladin Produktion

Ueli Hirzel

Château de Monthelon

89420 - Montréal

In co-production with

Fliegende Bauten , Hamburg

and

Théâtre Vidy - Lausanne

contact

cirque @monthelon.org

Concept and Creation

Cie. Cirque

Inspired by Henry Miller's short story

The smile at the foot of the ladder

Edition: Buchet.Chastel

Artistes/Performers

Sky Sela

Ayin de Sela

Mads Rosenbeck

Music and Composition

Sebastien Apert

Chief Technician

Daniel Ott

Technic

Romuald Simonneao

Light Design

Rolf Derrer

Credits

Anna Olszynska, Gry Bagøien, Carmen Blanco Principal, Rolf Derrer, Christian Dupont, Christoph Gärtner, Ingo Groher, Lawrence Guillot, Matthieu Hagene, Maya Hela Seeger, Alexandra Karam, Monica Klingler, Lucie Milvoy, Jeanne Laurent, Marlene Lelong, Lhasa, Andrez Perez, Que - Cir - Que, Caroline Richards, Susann Immekeppel, Christoph Stahel, Eva Bruderer, Zoé, Josefina Lehmann, Klaus Filip



Technical Requirements

The performance lasts approx. 90 minutes, without an interval.

The tent is 20m in diameter and has 340 seats.

Cirque will supply all necessary apparatus, along with all technical and artistic staff, but with the following requirements.

Cirque requires from the organizers:

- a quiet level space approx. 30 x 50 m. Important: easy access for lorries.
- it must be guaranteed that the tent be securable to the ground, either by steel pegs or on a concrete site "Hilti-rawl plugs", or similar devices (watch out for possible underground pipes or cables -electrics, telephone lines, water, sewage),
- Cirque is not liable for the damage of underground cables or pipes.
- the trucks and caravans are grouped around the tent, this is where we live, thus the site must possess a reasonable level of comfort for the duration of our stay,

Cirque: Up and Down

- set-up takes 3 days, 6 roadies/ stage-hands are needed for two days, only 2 stage-hands on the third day, one of these should have experience with electricity and lighting. Working hours to be organised by CIRQUE technical director.
- striking down: 6 stage-hands the day after the final performance
- on-site catering for all CIRQUE members during set-up and striking down
- on-site drinks (water and sodas) for all CIRQUE members during set-up and striking down

Cirque requires the following technical apparatus and infrastructure:

A crane or side-loader to unload (and reload) a 40 feet container approx 20 tons

- on the first day of setting up we need an industrial compressor with 20 meters of hosing (a hammer we bring)



- approx. 100 meters of fencing
- electric supply of one connection 3 phases x125 Ampère 50 Hz/380 Volt (CEE 125) aswell one connection 3 phases x32 Ampère (CEE 32), we bring our own distributors
- drinking water supply within a radius of 100 meters, Facility for disposal of waste water
- 2 international temporary telephone lines (bills to be paid by Cirque)
- -showers and sanitary facilities for the members of Cirque (not of the chemical variety, please!)
- public toilets (not of the chemical variety, please!) for the audience
- refuse containers or skips
- in cold weather 2 industrial heaters, each with 80'000 kcal/h including tanks- and an adequate supply of suitable fuel
- ticket control, 3 persons
- night watchman during the entire period of stay, on performance days from 10pm-8am, on performance free days from 8pm-8am.

Concerning starting time of the performance:

- please note that the performance must begin not before 8.30pm and not after 11pm. in summer, and between 7 p.m and 10 p.m. in winter.
- Cirque does not perform matinees.

Cirque - Press and Media:

- the artists are usually available for interviews on the day preceding the opening night. We request, however, that precise arrangements be made, with due warning.
- we request that all text material concerning Que-Cir-Que be shown to us before press release.
- Please acknowledge not to plan interviews on free days and the day of the premiere

Cirque and Sponsors:

- Cirque does not accept advertisements of any form inside or outside the tent. All arrangements concerning advertisement boards must be discussed with Cirque well before tour begin.



Press reports- quotes from the press

Never was a circus more silent, pensive and lyrical...
HAMBURGER ABENDBLATT

A circus that seems to be a poem
BILD

Dogma Circus

Cirque! Can it be put in more simple terms? Circus - pure and simple ...
Purged of beatings around the bush, ornaments and indulgent effects the show presents the humanity behind the artistry that occupies the worn floorboards of the stage. Naturally the four performers are experts in their fields, with specially designed acts and skills. But the performers' intense presence on stage and their acting personalities are stronger still, and this creates the intimate dogma circus. Here, the performers stare right into the audiences' eyes and insist on addressing them across the edge of the stage beneath the confined canvas. Because everyone is as much an actor as an artist. And we become the audience on the first row. Trembling calves, breath withheld and an ecstatic sea-blue gaze, staring concentrated into nothingness: The tightrope walker is close-up, and so are the rest of the inhabitants of the stage. See the talcum powder spill off the toe-shoes, as they dance across the tense wire, notice the hard skin in the high-heeled sandals. Get dust in your eyes, see the sweat flow and feel the rush of a heaven-bound, circulating flying boat under the dome of the tent.
BERLINGSKE TIDENDE

For last weekend's big success, Oerol 2004 fell back on circus in its familiar, original human form. In *The smile at the foot of the ladder*, a new quartet of modern clowns from France (Cirque), merge their sophisticated skills (tightrope walking on points, juggling with clubs and the endearing clowning of an oversized 'bird comedian') with Henry Miller's tragic story of ambition, perfection, imitation and the unique character of clown August. The group produces magic from the poetry of highly trained, elastic bodies and the sound of archaic metal.
DE VOLKSKRANT

Spectacular performance by Cirque

...Unpretentious enjoyment of the acrobatics and clowning is as possible as accompanying Cirque in the search for the deeper meaning of Miller's poetry ('the search for the self, your true being'). This freedom of choice, combined with the high level of the acrobatic stunts and exceptional music on homemade instruments, makes *The smile at the foot of the ladder* an extremely strong production.
FRIESCH DAGBLAD



'The smile at the foot of the ladder' by group Cirque clearly starts off as circus, but as the show progresses, more elements are added. This circus is seen through a kaleidoscope of twisted emotions, beautifully accompanied by melancholy music played on homemade percussion instruments.

LEEWARDER COURANT

French group Cirque astonish at Oerol with virtuoso simplicity

...With the minimum of resources and maximum professionalism, Cirque raises 'The smile at the foot of the ladder' to great heights, using the minimum of resources and maximum skill. Creativity is the key. Virtuosity in all its simplicity.

DE TELEGRAAF 14 June 04

This quiet circus works wonderfully, based on Henry Miller's judgement: "The clown is an active poet

HAMBURGER MORGENPOST

These are stories that speak to all five senses, and to the sixth one to boot. With images that move us, take our breath away, finally let us be enchanted again.

FINANCIAL TIMES

After a quarter of an hour one looks at one's watch and wonders why the performance is over. The watch says 11 o'clock, it began at 9.30, where did the time go? It disappeared in looking, listening, in enchantment...

DIE WELT

Heading for the sky

The small French company Cirque have created little pearls of joy from pure circus magic

How many feet does a clown have? And how far away is the sky?

There are moments of bliss, where everyone levitates in this small circus tent by Trianglen. And then there's the difficulty of landing.

This is the essence of this little pearl of joy performance, created by the French quartet company Cirque: About reaching for an ideal in the sky. Alternately the artists tell the story of a circus clown, who longs to be another clown, but realises that he needs to land in himself.

POLITIKEN



Where else can you find happiness?

The tightrope has made deep grooves in her feet. Her big-toe and its enlarged bunion grabs hungrily around the wire, and she undertakes a lonely duel with gravity. The muscles of her thigh move slightly, as her arm waves a velvet glove, like a fairy leaf, for balance. She is in a dream world of weightlessness.

She becomes braver. Starts to jump on the wire - small jumps, bigger ones, wilder ones - until she does a split on the thin rope. And then she puts on toe-shoes and they too find their groove in grotesque ballet leaps.

All the time she is smiling. An immensely delighted smile. For each successful step she becomes more ecstatic, and then she attempt the impossible: Placing a ladder on the wire - she climbs to the sky...

Where else can you find happiness?

Two performing sisters

But is happiness really happiness at all? This is how Henry Miller's short story "The smile at the foot of the ladder" becomes twisted and turned in the wonderfully poetic circus adaptation by the French new circus Cirque by Trianglen, in Copenhagen. Full of beauty, gentility and wisdom - wearing the kind of smile-wrinkles around the eyes that can't be created by make-up.

The performers are two sisters and their husbands: The tightrope walker Ayin de Sela - and her acrobat sister Sky. They illustrate Miller's story, from which they read extracts aloud, thrilled by the clown who wishes to give his audience "eternal joy".

Sky's husband, Mads Rosenbeck - "you got it, I'm the Dane" - juggles with carpets, clubs and sleeves, and the dream becomes visible on the outside of his coat. He hasn't performed in Denmark for 14 years, and amongst the audience was a longing welcoming committee.

Mads Rosenbeck's talent is exquisite; he is an obvious choice for the film part of the library thief, because he can look so very learned and innocent in his gold-rimmed glasses - and yet he hides all sorts of things under his coat... And where Mads Rosenbeck's movements possess wildness, his musical brother-in-law, Sebastian Apert, owns a corresponding passion in his flamenco-fiery sounds. They are emitted from his creation, a cart full of water instruments and wobbly funnels and anything that can make a noise.

Still the performance's transformation occurs when Sky sits on the floorboards and puts on some white clown make-up. It is an ancient circus act and this is plainly stated. And yet the trick works: As the clown appears in the woman, the dream appears too.

The dream of achieving the impossible. Such as climbing a ladder to the sky. Right up into the sky.

FOOLS25 INFORMATION

The clown with four feet

Most exquisite of all is the clown act, where a girl with a wonderfully expressive rubber-face, puts on white clown make-up and suddenly has four feet instead of arms and legs.

Watching her march around the stage with a face full of amazement is clown comedy at its very best. Yet again, because subtlety and under-acting is the very foundation of the act itself.

The performers very well deserved the standing ovations. This includes the musician, who is just as brilliant as the rest, as he beats and sings his way round the stage in a solo number - after 1 1/2 hour full of surprises, clever acts and delicate poetry of the most exotic kind.

JYLLANDS-POSTEN



Megalomania

Auguste's story seems at first glance unrelated to that of Cirque's artistes. He is a megalomaniac clown, they are three self-conscious acrobats and a quiet musician. But as the story is told, it transpires that the lives of Auguste and of the actors overlap seamlessly. So much so, in fact, that they wrong-foot the audience: are they performing their own circus tricks here, or are they playing the characters from the book?

Judging by the opening scene, the former seems more likely. Tightrope walker Ayin astounds with her incredibly agile body. She is able to move graciously along a taut steel cable, even on stiletto heels. Doing the splits on the rope seems a mere bagatelle; only when she jumps a metre and a half into the air, from this extremely awkward position, does it get really exciting.

And it is only when 'ringmaster' Sky starts reading the story of Auguste that it really becomes clear that Cirque is no ordinary circus performance. From this moment, all of the tricks fall into the context of the sad tale of Auguste, a clown who is stretched to breaking point by his quest for eternal happiness. This is revealed, for example, when, following a drastically un-successful performance, the clown is demoted to dogsbody. Suddenly, Cirque attendant Mads appears on stage. He can't decide whether to start sweeping the stage or juggling with some clubs that happen to be lying there.

He eventually combines the two in a spectacular act that demands the admiration of the other actors. Is Mads being himself here, or Auguste? And what about Sky, who dresses up as a clown when the story reaches the point when Auguste deputises for the new clown Antoine, who has fallen ill? Why does tightrope walker Ayin get so angry when Sky and Mads derive a great deal of pleasure from their roles as clown and juggler? Because they are no longer interested in the story ('Antoine dies from a feeling of redundancy'), or because she feels excluded?

The audience can decide for itself. Unpretentious enjoyment of the acrobatics and clowning is as possible as accompanying Cirque in the search for the deeper meaning of Miller's poetry ('the search for the self, your true being'). This freedom of choice, combined with the high level of the acrobatic stunts and exceptional music by Sebastian Apert on homemade instruments, makes *The smile at the foot of the ladder* an extremely strong production.

by ARJEN BAKKER. FRIESCH DAGBLAD 12 June 04

In 1959 the polish theatre giant Jerzy Grotowski, proclaimed for actors the future of "poor theatre". "Cirque", the next in the series of productions following the legendary "Cirque Oï" and world success "Que-Cir-Que", has now done the same with a poor circus. Three artistes: Ayin de Sela, Sky Sela and Mads Rosenbeck with the musician Sebastien Apert, show to us in reduced form the heart of circus: the dream of taking off from reality. They enchant the audience with the simplest of means. In opposition to this is Miller's text "The smile at the foot of the ladder" read by a different actor or actress each week. Among others: Dietmar Mues, Georgette Dee, Bernd Grawert, Ulrike Grote, Annelore Sarbach and Catrin Striebeck. Miller describes a clown who is desperately searching for himself. Sky Sela goes lives this process of searching and development with great intuition and melancholy. It is she who makes the dream of flying come true when she takes off for the circus sky in a tiny rowing boat. Images that make the poor circus a true circus.

HAMBURG:Pur, august 2002



With ease the human being is enchanted, and then he thinks.

The most beautiful things in life require us not to breath a word. Therefore : hush!, dear reader, don't tell anyone, the following is for your ears only. In the tent -theatre Fliegende Bauten a few enchanting artistes are performing a sort of circus that re-defines itself every evening. A man with a beautiful voice reads a story and, in between, three artistes and an artistic musician perform their tricks. The artistes do this with only a few props, the musician drums on a strange instrument created by the brothers Baschet. His bass drum is the floor of the stage.

"The smile at the foot of the ladder" is the text. Henry Miller wrote it and it is quite philosophical. I think he wants to tell us that nothing is more precious than being oneself. And that revenge will be taken if one tries to hide oneself in someone else, because one is no longer able to cope with ones own life. Especially in the case of the famous Clown August. He wants to be the No Name clown Antoine inorder to be able to begin his career again. The other, Antoine in this case, has no other alternative ; he has to die. There is no place for oneself in anyone else.

At the beginning a woman gets into an oldfashioned looking type of wooden flying boat with rudders and tries to pull herself, and the strange little ship, up on a rope. It doesn't work of course. Happens to us all! That our great strengths, as in the case of this Countess Münchhausen, fail in the face of the simplest things. Sometimes the artists do things that seem to a reply to the text, more often they do something completely different. The text and the tricks play with each other.

After a quarter of an hour one looks at one's watch and wonders why the performance is over. The watch says 11 o clock, it began at 9.30 , where did the time go? It disappeared in looking, listening, in enchantment...

Go and see it, once every week, because the reader changes every week. By the way, at one point Countess Münchhausen rows with her little boat into the air, right up to the top of the tent. Such a contraption would have been more useful for the little brownie instead of his bed. "More! More!" He sceamed. If you keep very quiet, you might hear him."

(TRS) DIE WELT



Ayin de Sela
Tightropewalker
Born: 12/4/69

Nationality: Mexican American

Projects

02	Creation „Cirque“
1999-00	Cie Pocheros „La Maison Autre“
1993-99	Duo „Ayin et Sotho“
92	„Fascination“, Cirque du Soleil, Japan - Tournee
1987-91	Pickle Family Circus, U.S.A

Training

91	Ecole Nationale de Cirque de Montréal
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Awards

96	La medaille d'or, Festival mondial de Cirque, Belgien
96	Prix de public, Festival mondial de Cirque, Belgien
96	Prix de la press, Festival mondial de Cirque, Belgien

Sebastien Apert
Musician and Composer
Born: 05/03/70
Nationality: French

Projects

2002-03	winter tour with Georgette Dee - „only lovesongs“
02	Creation „Cirque“
1999-02	Studio - Sessions, Collectif Zimpala
1992-98	Different formations in France and abroad (Mark Turner, Bill Evans)

Training

91	Diplome of Honour from the Musical Institute, Los Angeles
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CD's

02	Dupain (Virgin)
02	Zuco 103 (Cramed Disk)
02	Georgette Dee (Only lovesongs)



Mads Rosenbeck
Theatrical Juggler
Born: 16/12/66

Nationality: danish

Projects

02	Creation „Cirque“
02	Recherche sur le cirque improvisé, Verdun (F)
02	Laboratoire de Clowns et Spectacle, Martigues (F)
01	Les Barraques - CNAC, Cherbourg, Parc de la Vilette, Paris (F)
1999-02	Cie Pocheros (La Maison autre)
98	Ko-motion New York, U.S.A
1994-97	Cie Pocheros (Cirque d'images)
1994-95	Cie Philippe Goudard Marie-Paule B. (Nun, Nu)
1994-95	Cie Jérôme Thomas (Hic-Hoc)
1986-89	Circus Krone et Circus Charlie - Dänemark

Training

1989-94	Centre National des Arts du Cirque, Châlons-Sur-Marne (C.N.A.C.)
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Teaching work

02	Centre national des Arts du cirque, Chalons sur Marne
99	Ecole de Cirque, Elbeuf
99	Ecole de Cirque, Chatellerauld
98	Centre national des Arts du cirque, Chalons sur Marne
98	Théâtre Circule, Genève
98	Ecole de Cirque, Bruxelles
98	Ecole de Cirque, Rosny sous Bois,
1994-95	Université Royale des beaux arts (Phnom Penh)



Sky Sela

Artiste

Born: 24/08/70

Nationality: Mexican American

Projects

02	Creation „Cirque“
1999-02	Cie Pocheros „La Maison Autre“
1990-98	Cie Pocheros „Cirque d'Images“
1990-93	Summer tour, Circus Flora, Missouri U.S.A
88	Circus Circus, Belgien

Training

93	Centre de perfectionnement C.N.A.C
1990-93	Ecole Nationale de Cirque de Montréal
88	Passage at Centre National des Arts du Cirque, Châlons-Sur-Marne (C.N.A.C.)

Teaching work

99	Workshop for young handicaps, Elbeuf
98	Théâtre Circule, Genève
94	Université Royale des Beaux - Arts, Phnom Penh
93	Théâtre Circule, Genève