



STRIP-TEASE FORAIN

U-STRUCTURE
NOUVELLE



STRIP-TEASE FORAIN

CREATION 2014

Inspired from Susan Meiselas' Carnival Strippers – Steidl Publishers, Göttingen, Germany

“Watch it, watch it right now!

Stop the music!

You’re gonna see burlesque, striptease, hootchie-kootchie, and daddy-o it’s all the way.

The show starts right now—now’s the time to go”

The team

Director: Mathias Beyler

Writing, dramaturgy, assistant: Stefan Delon

On stage: Phil Von, Gaëtan Rusquet, Frank Michel, Sébastien Lenthalic, Lorenzo Dallaï, Louis Beyler, Christophe Beyler et Patrice Barthès

Music: Phil Von

Lights: Martine André

Costumes: the actors, with the skills of Karine Trelon

Scenography: Christophe Beyler

Graphism: Axelle Carruzzo

The creation

Audience: 15 y.o.+

Lengh: 75 mn

The creation Strip-Tease Forain is supported by:

The DGCA (Head Office of the Artistic Creation – entity of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs), the DRAC Languedoc-Roussillon (regional entity of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Languedoc-Roussillon) and the Regional Council of Languedoc-Roussillon.

The DGCA and the SACD (Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers)

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The Diagonale, Languedoc-Roussillon network for creations in public spaces.

The creation is co-produced with Le Cratère - Alès' Scène Nationale (public theatre).

Creation-in-residence at Mix'Art Myrys (Toulouse), at L'Atelline - Lieu de Fabrique Arts de la Rue (street art workshop in Languedoc-Roussillon), and at Domaine des Trois Fontaines - Le Pouget (34).

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The U-structurenouvelle company is under a 2 years contract with the Regional Council of Languedoc-Roussillon and the General Council of Hérault. It is supported by the city of Montpellier by an operating aid.

Strip-Tease Forain

It is not a title. It is a book and an encounter, like when you know, at first sight, that it is going to be with you for a long time. A tattered old book that is passed from person to person; a friend gave me a photocopy of it; he got it from a friend...

Photographs, and texts, well, more like words really: the pitchman, the girl doing it, the man watching her, his wife, a guy waiting, a woman in charge... In fact, it is a crude and fantastic universe; a world that, as it unfolds, speaks of freedom and fear in equal measure, a book that smells of cheap make-up and sweat. It is a dream that survives by the skin of its teeth, grit and determination. It could be called: Marilyn is dead; I can't love any more.

It is also need: the need to be on the road, to be 'outside'. Restoring this universe's place in the margins, like a reunion on the fringes. What limits us also defines us. No walls and categorically no theatre walls. The ability to welcome the audience too, and guide them, step-by-step.

Therefore, we perform outdoors: in the street, a park, a cul-de-sac, a quiet corner. 'Outside' means something more here too - what try to cover up about a city: the criminal, the embraces, out of sight out of mind, gatherings of more than three people, cardboard cities, drunkenness, in contrast to the 'move along now please' culture.

To convey these women's voices about men, nothing but men. To go off on a tangent, move away from re-enactment and try for the crux of the matter. To shy away from tempting clichés and to speak about the human that is there. To show sensitivity where it is no longer expected, or no longer wanted. To avoid mocking, crude, clumsy, or just downright pathetic redundancy.

So, I came up with a lorry and a U-shaped stage with the audience both inside and outside the structure. Two doors in the trailer open onto the dressing rooms, the flip side of this glitzy and glamorous world that parades, teases and pulsates with a dirt-cheap dream.

So much for the universes.

The actors [at first glance]:

Sensitive Souls

*The people, the ones with whom I dream,
form a group, a clan.*

*They draw on the human; they nourish me, they guide me.
I have encountered, known, recognised or sensed them all.*

*They are strong, beautiful from a full life that they let unfold around a gesture
or a word.*

They force me to make no concessions, to go unmasked.

Together we will advance uncovered, cleansed and laid bare.

It is with them that I am starting,

it is thanks to them.

Frank Michel

> co-created Arts Sauts and then up took up singing.

Phil Von

> fronts the electro-flamenco group Von Magnet; he is a tap-dancer and musician.

Louis Beyler

> is my father and has been for over fifty years.

Gaëtan Rusquet

> is handsome, he 'performs' and it is really something.

Sébastien Lentheric

> loves, he moves, and gets things and bodies moving.

Patrice Barthès

> is strong, he dances, makes the air crackle, swears in Occitan, hurls abuse, and cries too.

Lorenzo Dallai

> is an Italian dancer, his body is alive in a way that is rare to find.

Christophe Beyler

> is my brother, he makes sets and installations, and he has put on acts.



Snapshot

A feeling, a déjà-vu, the impression that time is frozen, standing still, lying in wait. And then these bodies ruined by their passions, sculpted by the effort of it all; they come and go, humming their signature tune, almost distractedly, reluctantly, exuding don't touch. All of that is behind them. They have already experienced the future. These shadows that burnt too brightly could have left us earlier; they touched the sun and nothing happened. But still.

There are several of them, gentle and powerful, creating just by being, wandering through a perpetual present, parading across their pathetic stage; and then the words come, simple, clear, indifferent, hanging in the air. There is tenderness, a little sadness, confidence, but not even a hint of cynicism or nostalgia. **MELANCHOLY.**

Although this framework is simple it utilises several different media:

Dance, of course, in a contemporary reinterpretation of the strip tease. It plays with languor, attraction and repulsion, almost hypnotically building the stage for the voice; the text with its delicate, intimate theatre approach brought out onto the street. They are both carried and sustained by sound and music. The music takes us on a stroll through the depths of our collective memory, where Marilyn hangs out with John Cage; there is singing too, but ever so softly, like humming to silence voices that are haunting us; and the sound that must brim over, clearing a path, creating its own space.

So, outside

But out the way, hidden from sight. We have to create this place, inhabit it (craft district, park, promenade, outdoor carpark, cul-de-sac, etc.).

Some chairs around and inside the space, a few tables.

An autonomous place, implying that the performance has a before and an after. Soft lighting, an atmosphere in which no one speaks above a whisper. This lorry, this platform - nothing brand new or artificially aged - they are solely functional. And then a barely perceptible makeup table for a sad and concentrated procession of actors, once again hardly visible.

Formally, the separation between the audience invited inside the catwalk (U-shaped parade stage) and those outside it fosters a first mise-en-abyme. This is reinforced by the presence of a dressing room/lorry that appears and disappears depending on the desired focus point.

An outside-the-box project that seeks out underworld spaces to provide it with the intimacy needed for a specific audience-actor interaction. We aim for gaping sensitivity, without recourse to a specific or cumbersome technique. Suggesting right up close, and not giving a damn.

With music too

But from a transistor radio, or like one of those sound systems at a market lining pedestrian streets on a public holiday. Worn out songs that everyone knows, that no longer belong to anyone, covered so many times that we are surprised to hear them and their lyrics again because we remember them from elsewhere sung by someone else. Songs that are almost spoken, strained, charged, but smooth, and that whisper in the ear and make our emotions run wild.

And bodies

Multiple, diverse, each one presiding over its own ruin, diving and resurfacing to catch breath, only a heartbeat away from collapse. Bodies, put on show, in balance, in the thick air that restrains them, desperately trying, slowly, to show more, to show what lies under the skin. A strip-tease down to the spirit, peeling away wounds, masks and stockings falling haphazardly, bodies submitted, in their almost uselessness, to petty fragile dances.

And then the text too

It is simple, clear, accurate and concrete. It talks about the women who do it and those who did it in the past, about oneself tomorrow, about what you need to get by, about courage. It is delivered seriously and settles, almost invisibly, on a thread running from mouth to ear. With words that are sometimes crude and sometimes gentle it describes the one watching, this mirror, in fact, almost a double: she who gives and he who takes: a strange connection. And this travelling family, these carnival entertainers, united in their hope for money, giving relentlessly, plunging into the human. Nothing is kept quiet. They know who they are, where they are and what they want.

After

Having crafted a fine line between performance and audience, we want to pursue things further. A performance that transforms, seamlessly, into something else. A more informal time during which, through encounters and desires, each actor can abandon themselves to their act. Performing in a space reconfigured as a 'club' and ridding themselves of the stress of the show. From a written, orchestrated offering, revolving around the intimacy of a text delivered to the ear, a more playful space can be born, an after.

Note on the script by Stefan Delon

The text, *Carnival Strippers*, written by the professional photographer Susan Meiselas, collates photographs of and interviews with women earning a living by displaying their bodies, and the little world surrounding them (customers, manageress, pitchman, etc.). Therefore, it is not a creation in the strict sense of the term, but a choice, a montage, in which the layout (interview extracts and photographs) is deliberate.

This modest assortment leaves the reader with mixed sentiments of greed, pity and terror. Although dated, this offering (in the sense of what is being offered) deeply moves today's reader-voyeur because what is on offer is human.

These women-bodies-goods are offered to buyers-voyeurs and the carnival business makes a profit from the transaction. The aim is to take your stash and go back home to sit it out until the next season. The desire to normalise the relationship to this work is so strong that we almost forget the 'product' being sold: a naked body, sometimes touched, sometimes felt up.

The text leaves us with a strange feeling of familiarity, of déjà-vu, of been there done that, as if we ourselves were these photographed human beings. From the position of readers-voyeurs we become involuntary actors, as if our very intimacy was stripped bare. Whilst the point of a strip-tease is indeed to reveal the body, this book shows what we are at our most intimate. It is not pretty, nor is it ugly: it is inexplicable.

The work of scripting this project cannot omit the inexplicable. It cannot avoid stripping the intimate bare as it must allow the audience to explore the question of the human condition. It takes the trust that forged the bond between Susan Meiselas and her witnesses as a starting point. Then, it leans on a team of artists, technicians and creators who, in turn, can rely on one another, aware of the fact that the goal does not really authorise any of them to, yet, at the same time, from start to finish trust and total respect is demanded.

That is why this creation matured tentatively. Each participant was chosen, not only on the usual criteria of ability or talent, but primarily because they knew one another extremely well.

Mathias Beyler called on me as we have been collaborating and rubbing shoulders for over twenty years; the artists are not first and foremost actors, but people that Mathias chose for their predominantly human nature. In fact, only two of them are actors; the others are a former circus artist, a visual artist, dancers, performers). They (myself included) accepted this project, in full knowledge of its purpose, readily and intrigued.

The process of creating the performance's substance is polymorphous, nevertheless it is still writing. It mixes:

- > Selecting extracts from Carnival Strippers
- > The reasoning behind these choices
- > The verbalisation of the intimacy revealed by the actor
- > Interviews with current strip-tease artists
- > The meaning of the song lyrics and music used for the 'acts'
- > Fashioning our 'acts'
- > The relationship created between the 'unmasking' and the audience's gaze
- > The impact of shifting this space-time to the public space

Every one of these points is the object of a specific rehearsal moment and represents, each time, an opportunity to refine the script. Each performance itself is, most likely, subjected to a renewed questioning of scripting points.



A few words about melancholy

Meiselas' human beings are melancholic. Over the course of the interviews they seem to lose interest in the world around them, the ability to love, self-esteem - as if seeking punishment. The pull of this so-called easy money from the strip-tease business stems from their various lacks (material, emotional, social, etc.). It draws them unrelentingly towards this need to always have more, this material accumulation that characterises our civilisation, our Western drive. These strip-tease artists could be our society's standard bearers.

There is (just as there always is where melancholy is involved) something tragic about the lives of these women, like a glimpse of the end that awaits them.

A small anonymous bronze from the Roman era depicts the warrior Ajax, seated, despondent, his head in his right hand, his left hand on the pommel of his sword, deep in meditation. In fact, this is the moment before his suicide. The artist did not sculpt the instant before (the massacring hero) or the instant after (Ajax impaled himself on his sword), but the moment between. This work is called the melancholy of Ajax.

In this performance the legend predicts a tragic ending (melancholy is often associated with suicide or suicidal thoughts). However, the instant depicted by this sculpture is not that end, and furthermore, nothing can prove the necessarily tragic end to a melancholic state: we can also, very simply, recover and continue living... transformed, changed... evolved. In the light of this interpretation, the art historian Jean Clair has proposed that: "a new vision and utopia should include melancholy as a paradox. This would be a new, revolutionary historical project."

We subscribe to this new vision with gusto.

Samples of the text, randomly chosen

Cindy, stripper

Nobody really taught me. They showed me how to take off the top, bottoms, and panels in a hurry, like zip, zip, zip, and they said, "Well, kid, go on." And I got out there and I didn't take off nothin' until Didi stuck her head out the door and said, "Take your clothes off." I just stood there and I took them all off. I didn't dance. It's really scary the first time, because you don't know whether they're gonna laugh at you. You're afraid they're gonna laugh or they're gonna leave, or demand they money back, or else they're just gonna stare and look at you.



Rehearsal photos - © Marc Gaillet

The Lament of an Aging Stripper

*My salad days have long been gone,
I used to be green, now I'm jaded,
I'm old as hell and over the hill,
I'm getting to feeling downgraded.*

*Time has taken its toll on me,
I'm afraid I'm fading but fast,
But I'd love one more run around the runway,
Before I rehash my past.*

*I'm washed out, washed up, and wiped out,
On that you can safely bet,
It won't be long before I join
The geriatric set.*

*I repine past rapport with the audience,
It was one mad mass love affair;
And I want one more go, in a burlesque show,
Before I quit bleaching my hair.*



Rehearsal photos - © Marc Gaillet

Lena, strip-teaseuse

Lena : I had to get stoned the other night. I have to be totally with-drawn from thaht place to go there. This job fucks my head up.

Patty : Don't blame it on the job. Honey, after this week, that's all over for the season. I'm wondering about the rest of your life. Yours eyes were so glassy. You were so out of it.

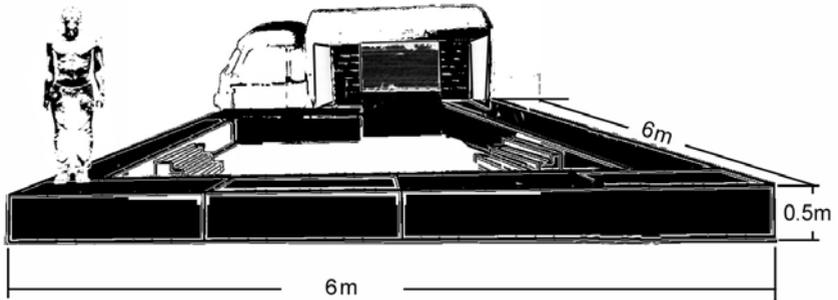
Lena : I had to be to get up there. You don't know what it did to me. Their dirty hands flying up at me-

Patty : Don't use that as an excuse. Be honest with yourself-you kids are using this as an excuse to shoot and carry on.

Lena: I don't shoot. I smoke. And I'm not using the job as an excuse. I simply said that to work I get stoned. But I didn't want to be as loaded as I was the other night. I had to get that stoned in order to let them eat my pussy.

August, 1973 : *I'm gonna strip till I get on my feet. When I get on my feet I'll decide what I want to do. Right now I got no place to go-I'm stuck. I'm a little embarrassed about it. I've always considered myself a very clean person, even though I may be liberal-minded and free. I'm not a pig, let's put it that way, and strippers strike me as being pigs. The human body is beautiful, but not the way they push it. You can strip and do it very elegantly, very beautifully-and they don't. I hate to say it but I don't think they do. If I'm gonna have to do it that way to get started, that's what I'm gonna do, but I don't know if I can. I'll strip, I'll dance around, but I'll be goddamned if I'm gonna push it right into somebody's face.*

Scenographic evocation:





Mathias Beyler

Director

Mathias trained as an actor (CNR Montpellier) and has been directing since 1991. He is the artistic director of compagnie Interdit au Public and he founded Espace Perspectives in Avignon. He is co-founder of the IDEE group together with Stefan Delon, and artistic co-director of compagnie Myrtilles and the .lacoopérative creation space in Montpellier with Lucille Calmel. He is the driving force behind many projects and spaces.

As an actor he has collaborated with Pierre Etienne Heymann, Viviane Théophilidès, Louis Beyler, Armand Gatti, Jean-Marc Bourg, Luc Sabot, Stefan Delon... Over the course of these encounters his lines of research have broadened in scope to encompass such diverse fields as sound, the body, performance, improvisation and work-in-progress, as well as pedagogy.

In 2005 he joined forces with Stefan Delon to found U-structurenouvelle and set about practical research into experimental theatre.

Stefan Delon

Assistant director

Stefan trained at the École Supérieure d'Art Dramatique (Higher School for Dramatic Arts) at the Conservatoire National de Montpellier (Montpellier National Conservatory). Since then he has worked with such directors as Jean-Marc Bourg, Michèle Heydorff, Mathias Beyler, Renaud Bertin, Gerhard Bauer, etc. ; and also Bernard Sobel, Christian Esnay (all his shows since 2003), Didier Carette, Pierre-Etienne Heymann, Viviane Théophilidès, etc.

His career as an actor led him to question the theatre performance as an artistic subject and the paradoxical position of the actor-creator. In particular, he embodied this questioning in a monologue that he adapted, directed and performed: Mars by Fritz Zorn (2007 creation at the Montpellier CDN).

This reflection naturally led him to directing, which he first explored by founding the IDEE Group (federation of three Montpellier theatre companies: the adventure lasted from 1993 to 1999) and then U-structurenouvelle in 2005 with Mathias Beyler, in Montpellier.

Compagnie U-Structurenouvelle

Stefan Delon and Mathias Beyer founded U-STRUCTURENOUVELLE in 2005.

Through their joint experience they work on the political foundations of contemporary theatre. They are exploring the multiple aspects of the artistic field and applying them at all levels and to all practices. To date they have penned over ten projects, including BAAL by Brecht and THE POSSIBILITIES by Howard Barker.

Who we are

Friends and colleagues for over twenty years, Stefan Delon and Mathias Beyer joined forces in September 2005 to found U-STRUCTURENOUVELLE.

Having both succeeded in developing impressive personal careers, sustained by both aesthetic and ethical choices, they decided to invest their knowledge in this new challenge in the heart of the Languedoc-Roussillon region.

U-STRUCTURENOUVELLE strives to be a creative force, transmitting and sharing. The radical reflection that it brings to live performance and to the challenges of contemporary artistic creation allow it to claim and assert a specific and lifelong place in the local, regional and national cultural landscape.

It is in this spirit that its projects are based on contemporary texts (living or dead authors), revealing the mechanics of both the theatre and the world, and their representation. Quite simply it revises our view of the world.

U-STRUCTURENOUVELLE must forge the ties needed for this ambition and spark debate about living art. It cannot afford to overlook transmission, the fundamental driver of the discovery and emergence of thought. Thus, great emphasis is placed on artistic practice workshops - an essential breeding ground.

U-STRUCTURE NOUVELLE

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* To see or read more ++
<http://www.u-structurenouvelle.org>

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