

How do your projects get born?

Àlex Serrano: It's hard to say, but overall everything is born from an image, something very concrete, very visual. An image that in general, without us even knowing it, is the materialization of a number of ideas and thoughts that we have been considering before. Our thematic interests stem from a constant dialogue between us.

Pau Palacios: Yes, it's true. Àlex lives in Barcelona, I live in Italy. We meet almost every morning via Skype, but overall just solving practical issues. However, when we are on tour for a gig (which is often) we can't stop talking about everything that interests and worries us about the world today.

Àlex: For example, in February 2010, while on residency in Turin preparing our show *Katastrophe*, we decided that for the next show we were going to build a house on stage. That's it, nothing more. We liked the idea and stick to it.

Pau: The crisis in the mortgage system and the first evictions began in Spain in 2008. Surely by then, February 2010, we had been talking about those problems in our conversations on tour for over two years and the idea of building a house on stage emerged from this concern, as the symbol of something that had been growing slowly, conversation after conversation.

Àlex: Then, from February 2011 until the premiere of Brickman Brando Bubble Boom in October 2012, we had time to think deeper. Because at first we had just this image and this action, but we had nothing else: a theme, a subject or a concept. It was from this original "image plus action" that we started thinking we wanted to talk about homes, about how this human need of a home (almost an animal need) had been manipulated to transform it into the desire of owning a house, getting people to confuse the need to build a home with the need of owning a commodity called 'house'. And there emerged Brickman, a builder of the nineteenth century, and Brando, a scattered and disoriented actor, both unable to generate a home.

Pau: For *A House in Asia*, we read by chance a series of articles and discovered that Bin Laden's house was replicated twice. And we loved the image, three identical houses existing almost simultaneously in different parts of the globe. We're not talking about replicating an architecturally unique building as the Eiffel Tower, but a common house, Bin Laden's home, a house without any particular interest... except for who lived there. Finally, which of the three was the real one? In our collective imagination the 'real' house is the copy built for the movie. And this poses a fascinating problem, because it seems that the simulacrum imposes itself as the only reality we can access.

Àlex: We work through accumulation of layers. From an original image and concept, we generate tons of materials related to them. We accumulate layers of significance, we mix them, we establish connections between them and finally we get a multiform mutant of a thousand faces, a puzzle of signifiers that challenge the spectator to proactively approach the show.

How important are the residencies in your process of creation?

Àlex: They are fundamental. We started working seriously in residence in 2010 and now we can't work otherwise. All our shows are of our own creation, but we never start writing a text: we research, write and try at the same time. Therefore we need long processes in which phases of reflection and conceptualization alternate with phases of rehearsing, progressing through trial and error. *A House in Asia* was developed through three different residencies separated for several months and carried out in Italy, France and Belgium.

Pau: The residencies are a wonderful opportunity. We love working and we love to rehearse. When we're rehearsing, we can spend 18 hours locked in the rehearsing

room, with just some short breaks to eat and get some fresh air. If you are in your city, with your daily life awaiting you right after the door, the creative energy accumulated during the day gets lost as soon as you cross that door. Instead, if you lock yourself for ten days in a creation facility, working 24/7 (because then even your dreams become part of the process), then you can make decisive advances, solve many doubts. What's more, at the end of each residency you can do a presentation in front of an experienced audience, whose views are always useful to refine your process.

Àlex: But as we said, our residencies do not consist closing ourselves in a room and just start searching. We get to the residency with a lot of pre-work done, with clear ideas of what we want to try, with a dramaturgical structure. Our residencies are not so much a search process but the realization of what we have thought before. And after each residency, we value what is working and what's not so that we can start a new dramaturgical process that allows us to get to the next residency new materials that are a sum of all the things we tried and worked and all the new things we want to try...

Pau: And another important thing about residencies. We read somewhere that Alain Platel talked about the absurdity that each company had its own rehearsing infrastructure. Platel said that the value of the theatres was to embrace creation processes, to provide its services to creation. Theatres should not only be the containers to display the ended projects, but offer their facilities for the creation process. Understanding the residencies in this way makes that all theatres are "our theatres" and that your work belongs to them all too. And that's something we like.

Do you believe that theatre should be linked with the world today?

Àlex: It is essential. And it is essential to speak of our time with contemporary dramaturgies. For us it is not enough to just take a Shakespeare play, dress the actors as if they were hipsters and then say we are doing a blunt portrait of our time. No, sorry, Shakespeare spoke of his time, not ours. Shakespeare has universal characters and portraits passions that belong to any time. But also Euripides did. And Shakespeare didn't spend his life just staging versions of Euripides with the actors dressed in Elizabethan fashion, he spent his life writing. Contemporary writing is essential, addressing the reality of today with the tools of today, with the thinking of today. We can't pretend that philosophical, sociological and technological thinking has not changed since the sixteenth century to the present day.

Pau: That does not mean you have to face reality from the most imminent present, but that the narrative strategies, sociological instruments and technological tools have to be updated. In *A House in Asia* we turn to *western* movies to discuss the XXI century and *Brickman Brando Bubble Boom* talks about the current crisis in the mortgage system through a fictional builder of the nineteenth century. But all the concepts and tools we handle to deal with those subjects are contemporary.

How is it currently doing theatre in Spain?

Àlex: A drama. With the excuse of the crisis, the neofrancoist PP government in Spain and the catholic-neoliberal CiU government in Catalonia have smashed all that remained of contemporary theatre. They consider all contemporary and critic culture as the enemy, therefore they have frozen all production aids, promised a patronage law that have never been developed, they have raised tickets VAT to 21% (the highest in Europe with a lot of difference), they have cut public theatres budgets, withdraw their funding of riskier festivals and on and on. Spain is a wasteland. A few years ago we used to perform thirty times a year in Spain. In 2014 we have

performed seven times. And yet our international presence continues to grow.

Pau: We wanted to present *A House in Asia* a couple of weeks in Barcelona, to share our work with our people, but we had to give up the idea. The public theatre that wanted to program us offered us humiliating economic conditions. Presenting the show two days in any European festival brings us more profit (and possibly more audience) than two weeks in Barcelona.