



## INTERVIEW WITH SYLVIE OLIVE

*It was on the set of Jaco Van Dormael's latest film that I met Michèle Anne. She was struck by the setting – a little house in Watermael-Boitsfort that curiously recalled her childhood home. It clicked between us and she wanted to see me again. We ate together; she told me she wanted it to snow. To snow onstage. So we began to discuss that idea. For my part, when someone gives me a keyword, a host of images come into my head. So we started to ring the changes on this concept of snow. Snow: hostile, cold. The immaculate snow of snowstorms, of harsh winters, of infinite spaces. But also the snowfall of spring, of petals – or even the snowfall of autumn, of leaves.*

*We had in fact moved on to talking in terms of what has fallen, of falling... One word echoed another, one sensation another. More general concepts came up, such as those of climate and atmosphere. At one point, the material was at the heart of the matter: to represent what is natural, to suggest it – or to wrong-foot it – we thought of effects. Why not substitute ping-pong balls for the snow crystals? We would have to try things out, to test all our runaway imaginings against reality.*

*We moved on to a second phase; the idea was to use a whole range of effects to see how they would work out. And we weren't disappointed. We were like children. Four of us, to be exact – for Grégory and Nicolas had joined us. We let ourselves go, naturally, without preconceptions or any kind of censorship guiding us. And, best of all, we always finished up agreeing. No matter how arbitrary the choices made, this group harmony led us towards the same things. Afterwards, quite the opposite of the cinema where the script sets out a very precise framework of the author's intentions, it was necessary to narrow the spectrum so as to avoid an exponential effect whereby the list of things to be tried out would have been infinite, with one effect suggesting another.*

*It was only then that the script began to take shape, step by step, between us. It was great the way everybody spoke up and came up with ideas and a kind of improvisation developed – a bit like in music or film. We explored, but we concentrated on deciding on the paths to take, on identifying them, on recognising them in line with our intuitions. Each time, intuition led us back to enchantment. Everything one saw onstage plunged us into the world of fairytales.*

*So we persevered with our research until we arrived at a language that was more manufactured, more sophisticated. At a certain stage we even said to ourselves that the body couldn't simply be there, dancing – it would have to have a role of generating, of inventing something... Until we reached a breaking point. And then things took a radical turn. A different language emerged: tings that were very simple, very obvious came to us.*

*When we were starting on this business of fairy tales, I had begun to reread Alice in Wonderland and I watched Cocteau's La belle et la bête again and one thing had really struck me: in all these stories the body and its dimensions come up, a bit like when you are dreaming and you take on strange proportions... As the stage is a box par excellence, the dancer can easily change proportions there. So we thought of systems of steps, of windows that open and divide the space: effects worthy of the early days of the cinema, when they were exploiting the effects of the black box. Very simple effects, actually: a sheet of plastic, a projector, some water, a phenomenon of diffraction...and the magic appears.*

*The images are actually stronger than us. The most powerful are those we had not planned or calculated. But when they appear they stimulate our imagination in an incredible way and seem so obvious that we get caught up in them. Truly beautiful moments of jubilation.*

**Interviewed by Ivo Ghizzardi - La Raffinerie / Brussels**