

NEEDLES AND OPIUM

Ex Machina

Through highly visual staging, which is as much magic as it is theatre, Robert Lepage revisits, 20 years after its first production, *Needles and Opium*. Once again close collaboration between Scène Éthique and Ex Machina enabled to shape the artistic vision of set designer Carl Fillion and create a very unique scenography.

The synopsis of the play on the Ex Machina web site reads: "One night in 1949, on the plane bringing him back to France, Jean Cocteau writes his *Lettre aux Américains* in which fascination and disenchantment intertwine: he has just discovered New York, where he presented his most recent feature film, *L'Aigle à deux têtes*. At the same time, Miles Davis is visiting Paris for the first time, bringing bebop with him to the old continent. Forty years later, at the Hotel La Louisiane, in Paris, a lonely Québécois tries in vain to forget his former lover. His emotional torments echo Cocteau's dependence on opium and that of Davis' on heroin. There begins a spectacular withdrawal experience where the words and drawings of the prince of poets and the blue notes of the exceptional jazzman, accompany his leap into nothingness, the desperate effort of a man looking inwards in order to vanquish the pain and liberate himself from his love addiction."

The main scenic element totally dominates the stage, a rotating exploded giant cube on which images are projected on three of its walls. The cube allows moving

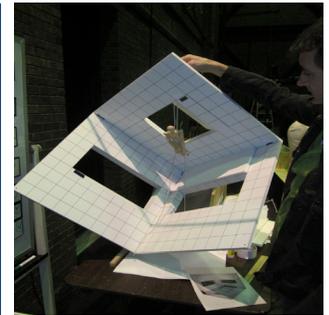
from Cocteau's universe to Miles Davis and the principal character in a blink. The cube's edges are 10 feet long and above and under the rotation axle are catwalk, corridor and wings to access the catwalk are installed. The back of each of the three walls allows for the technicians to move and attach accessories. Each wall includes a trap door that opens on 180 degrees and each trap can support a person's weight when closed and locked. The cube rotation speed is 1 revolution every 45 seconds and an artist can be attached to one of the walls while the cube rotates. Many safety features are included in the cube's design as in all of the scenic elements we design and build.

Production: Ex Machina
 Director: Robert Lepage
 Director Assistant: Normand Bissonnette
 Set Designer: Carl Fillion



Projections on the walls allows for complete transformation of the decor

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Decor mock-up



Preliminary assembly



Beams mounted on their support



Assembly for rehearsal in the SE Studio



Live performance