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Traces of circus

REVIEW CIRCUS

If you were to transform circus into visual art, what would it look like? Side-Show explores this in this intriguing double portrait.

Visual artist Aline Breucker and circus maker Quintijn Ketels together make up Side-Show, one of the three structurally subsidised Flemish circus companies. In their new performance *Portraits*, they throw the doors of their studio wide open. They also invite two of their circus artist friends, whose portraits they sketch: arial strap artist Camille Paycha (29) and Sander De Cuyper (41), one of Belgium's best jugglers.

This is a fresh and original concept that is somewhat reminiscent of the dancers portraits of choreographer Jérôme Bel, but which here is given an extra layer. Breucker, who is also on stage, tries to capture the traces of the movements of both artists. Thus she transforms De Cuyper's juggling rhythm into a visual score, whilst also capturing the imprints of Paycha's swinging back and forth. The colourful scribbles of the monoprints, which are exhibited in the décor, recall the work of Miró.

Visual art and performance are smartly interwoven here, leading you to imagine yourself in Andy Warhol's The Factory. The décor is full of plaster casts by De Cuyper and Paycha, but -as with Warhol - these are never portrayed as superstars. *Portraits* is actually a very human performance: don't expect any spectacular stunts at lightning speed, but an intimate look inside a studio space where delicate portraits are sculpted.

The flip side of this calm rhythm is that *Portraits* never becomes truly exciting, except when De Cuyper (it is well-timed for when the music falls still) drops a club that turns out to be made of plaster and smashes into pieces. So there are still small, pleasant surprises in this double portrait, which charms with its personal and honest approach.

Portraits by Side-Show. Until 23/12 in 30CC Leuven. To be performed in spring 2022 at the festivals Smells like circus in Ghent and Up in Brussels.