THE
MAGNET MAN
A FILM BY GUST VAN DEN BERGHE

CAST

Lucien Vindeveughel: **Danny Ronaldo**
Gervaise Malfait: **Isolda Dyachuk**
Ethel: **Mieke Dobbels**
Cesar Malfait: **Karel Creemers**
Victor Vanko: **Georges Christen**

CREW

Director / Script : **Gust Van den Berghe**
Director of Photography: **David Williamson**
Production Designer: **Natalia Treviño**
Costume Designer: **Alette Kraan**
Make-Up Designer: **Sophie Garlinskas & Emilie Franco**
Editor: **Thomas Pooters, David Verdurme & Benjamin Mirguet**
Music: **David Van Keer & Birger Embrechts**
Sound: **Matthias Hillegeer**

PRODUCTION

Producers: **Minds Meet**
In coproduction with: **Les Films Fauves, Lemming Film, Coproduction Office, Shelter Prod**
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International Sales: **Coproduction Office**

THE MAGNET MAN

by Gust Van den Berghe

2023, 90min, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands

Synopsis

Lucien is a human magnet: everything made of iron sticks to his body. Rural Belgium at the beginning of the 20th century is no place for his unusual natural talent. One day, he accidentally gets attached to a train that carries him far away. On this journey, Lucien stumbles across a travelling theatre and its colourful troupe of artists. His magnetism attracts both good and bad, often changing the course of his destiny.

THE MAGNET MAN tells the tragicomic tale of how our greatest talents can become our greatest flaws, and how unpredictable our lives can be.

Long synopsis

Lucien is a human magnet: everything made of iron sticks to his body. He lives a sheltered life with his parents in a small village in Flanders at the beginning of the 20th century. One day, a surprise delivery offers him and his father the opportunity to leave their home in pursuit of a brighter future. However, father and son soon get separated, as Lucien gets attached to a train that carries him far away.

Lost and alone, Lucien follows the sound of a laughing audience and discovers a traveling circus: the Théâtre Malfait. He is instantly captivated by the show. The director of the circus, César Malfait, offers Lucien a job that he hurriedly accepts.

As a new member of the eccentric circus, Lucien reveals his magnetism to César's beautiful daughter, Gervaise. They secretly start dreaming of an act that they hope to perform together one day, if they manage to convince her strict and impulsive father.

As the circus continues on its travels, an unfortunate event leads to Lucien's secret being revealed to the rest of the troupe. The opportunistic César exploits this revelation to turn Lucien into his latest exhibit. Placed in a cage next to a mermaid, Lucien becomes Luciano Amantini, the Living Magnet from the ashes of Pompeii.

Later on, Lucien decides to leave the circus when he receives bad news from home. Alone again, he retraces his steps back to his home that he finds locked and abandoned.

His meddling neighbor, Ethel, helps him write to Gervaise, but she lies to Lucien about the reply, telling him that Gervaise has died... Out of luck, Lucien accepts his fate and marries Ethel. When Ethel decides to be honest with Lucien and tells him the truth about the letter, Lucien is finally able to follow his own dream.

is: OPGEPAST.

Allen op post in
THEATER MALFAIT !!

Allo allo !!

OPtreden van het
wereldberoemd TRIO

est: ATTENTION.

Tout le monde au
THÉÂTRE MALFAIT !!

Allô allô !!

Performance avec le TRIO
mondialement célèbre

NOUVEAU

THÉÂTRE MALFAIT

Heden avond optreden van - Ce soir

Spectacle de Noël

Vader,
Zoon,
H. Geest!

le Père,
le Fils, & le
Saint-Esprit!

of het wereldberoemde TRIO

ENGAGEZ
DANS LES TROUPE

NOUVEAU

THÉÂTRE MALFAIT

Director's note

A FAMILY LEGEND

Making a film is like building a house; the foundation is the story and the individual rooms are various ideas, all connected by hallways and doors. Gradually, the house gets filled with things, often chosen unconsciously over the course of time. Every single object encapsulates a memory, a detail from our lives. I believe that the way we store our memories is very similar to how plays are staged. It was precisely this approach to storytelling that inspired the formal aspects of the film.

The starting point for THE MAGNET MAN was the idea to make a house the main stage, and a misplaced violin the main character. I had discovered a family legend about a stolen Stradivarius being passed from hand to hand, as everyone tried to steal it from each other. Just as it turned out to be a fake, it vanished. This inspired me to collect stories from various family members; I heard of those who had never followed their artistic ambitions, of those who had run away, and many other stories of murder and forbidden lovers.

As in most European families, the war plays an important part in this story, too; a relatively recent event that ripped lives and things apart, leaving behind bitter and cruel memories. Yet, a hundred years later, these memories spark a desire to tell stories.

THE STAGE

We had to be creative in order to turn this tale-like story into a feature film. An old, abandoned metal factory was turned into an old-school film studio in which we built everything from scratch. The production and set design, the clothing and props, were all carefully chosen, as if the world were especially designed for Lucien; as if he was living in a doll's house.

Throughout the film, I try not to show the real sky, except for when Lucien leaves his house for the first time. We even replaced it with a painted backdrop, creating a theater-like setting that greatly limited our visual movement. But it was shooting in that limited space that created the desired theatrical effect - with no birds in the sky and no swaying of the trees in the wind. Enforcing such limitations compelled us to find creative solutions and resort to the most essential.

Besides our desire to explore this old-fashioned, almost artisanal way of filmmaking, it also gave us the opportunity to give every single element or prop its own story and to omit anything that we considered to be irrelevant.

I think one of the greatest powers cinema possesses is the power of transformation. One human can transform into another. We can move from one space to the next without leaving our chairs. A small, first perhaps unnoticed prop can become a key element of a story. For a short time, we transform into something else, too. We choose to believe in the film. It fascinates me how film as a construct can communicate certain truths. Abbas Kiarostami once said that he lies in his films, but only in order to tell a greater truth. In a very different context, and in my own way, I agree with him and stay true to his idea.

CIRCUS

At first, I wanted to make a film about a house in Flanders and use only the walls and clouds as a backdrop. Yet for some reason, the idea of a traveling circus kept coming back to me. Every time I tried to dismiss it, the idea always managed to wheedle its way back in. So, I ended up leaving the house, quite literally, to join the circus, with the intention of returning soon after.

During my research, I came across the Circus Van den Berghe, a very old circus that traveled through Belgium and Germany. I was already working with Danny Ronaldo at the time, unaware that Circus Van den Berghe was an earlier iteration of his Circus Ronaldo, which turned out to be a very happy coincidence. The circus, dating back to the end of the 18th century, was called 'Circus Van den

Berghe' up until the 1970s-80s when Danny's father had changed the name to the more commercial 'Ronaldo'. As a child, Danny, who was already performing, was known as 'Patatje', which means 'little potato' in Flemish. He could not afford to juggle with real balls, so he juggled with potatoes, and each of his acts would end with a final potato falling onto a fork that he would hold in his mouth. It was these kinds of stories that I was looking for, and the manner in which they came together was beautiful. It's strange: when we think and write, we think we are working in the dark, moving stones until, eventually, we realize that all along the stones were part of the same mountain. It was very interesting to see how much of Danny's own history was reflected in the screenplay, and how much the founder of the circus resembled Lucien. I had this feeling of urgency when working with Danny, and maybe that's why he chose to work on this film, too: to take on his first role with me. The circus was part of the story even before I came up with the idea.

I wrote all the circus acts for the film, apart from the Strong Man's act (played by Georges Christen, who performs his own copyrighted numbers). It's funny that they are not real circus acts, but the product of my imagination. The real circus performances are those that occur outside of the show tent – the scene on the wagon roofs for example. The theater scene is inspired by the German 16th century Oberufer nativity play, which I would watch every year when growing up, serving as my initiation into acting and theater.

A hundred years ago, circuses from the north of France, Belgium and parts of Germany were not allowed to put on shows between Christmas and Easter. If they wanted to perform, they had to stage religious or moral plays. Even in Danny's family, they always had to perform Biblical scenes to survive the winter; his grandfather would be Jesus on the cross and his mother would play the Virgin Mary. It was the family's way of making people laugh.

What I really like about clowns is that when they enter the stage they have no past nor future. Yet they perform with a sartorial language and code that is traceable to old medieval street theaters or to the commedia dell'arte. They bear this melancholic weight, as if they knew that they are carrying all their ancestors' tales and tricks on their shoulders. The same goes for Danny – he too tried to reinvent his circus by adding more theatrical elements, in the style of commedia dell'arte.

Traditional circuses work by acts: each member of the family has its own, whether it be with a dog, a pony, a tightrope walker, or a clown. With Danny, it always starts from a storyline. He is not a Cirque du Soleil-like acrobat with a 3D show and moving screens. He is really exceptional, and I think he has found his own path. He continues to reinvent his own circus, just as his ancestors had done before him. His legacy, his three sons and a daughter, carry on the tradition along with their own circus shows.

THE TROUPE

This was Danny's first film experience. I am very happy because he does not play the clown, as we might have expected. I recently saw him perform in a children's show where he played Death. It was brilliant, really moving. I understand that it is important to him to work with a real artistic challenge. When I offered him the role in the film, he said he was much like Lucien, that he could see himself making the same mistakes.

All performers immersed themselves in their roles. For example, no one ever saw Fakir (Wouter Van Lierde) without his costume. The conductor (Eric De Kuyper) walked around day and night with a cigar. For me, it was a sign that I had found the right souls for the characters, rather than the right actors.

1830

LUCIEN

I saw myself in Lucien, mirrored through my own ancestors. Part of his character is that of the clown, which in itself is to be a mirror to society, a reflection rather than a political or intellectual conviction. Through humor, through his character, we can bring people together. Lucien is naive. He doesn't realize what is happening around him or how others perceive him.

I think Lucien's way of thinking is like a child's. I believe God once existed but died the day he was called God. When we label things, we knock them down. Lucien does not believe in giving names to things. He is a believer without words. He believes first in the world, then in those around him. It was important to me that Lucien was not a superhero. Instead, I gave him a completely useless power – I made him magnetic. Nowadays, there are so many films about superheroes with extraordinary powers but I was attracted to the idea of having a useless superhero. A superhero born too early, and in Flanders. He cannot fly nor save humankind. It is funny and sad, funny because it is sad.

I find strength in characters who have no desire to be strong by themselves. I don't want to pretend that I know how this world works or communicate some kind of message through my characters. I have this magical journey before me whenever I start a project. I guess these characters guide me. To be completely honest, it is perhaps my desire to become like them. I sincerely love every character in my films, even the cruel ones.

THE CLOWN

One of my first cinema experiences was seeing Fellini's THE CLOWNS on a very tiny television. I carry its impact on me to this very day, especially the Fratellini scenes, in which we meet the three basic archetypes of the clown.

Pladijs, César, and Lucien represent these three archetypes. Pladijs as the Pierrot, who represents tradition, law and rule. César as the Auguste (and antagonist of Pladijs) is loud, bad-mannered, opportunistic and grotesque. Lucien as the Tramp, is the passive character (who is often drunk). It was thanks to Danny that I gave Lucien more of a romantic touch. He is sensitive and follows a childlike definition of love. He belongs neither at home nor at the circus. For me, the figure of the tramp embodies the human quest for knowledge and love.

GERVAISE

The role of females in European circuses has always seemed ambivalent to me. Either they were presented as bearded freaks, forbidden fruit, or as untouchable images of childlike innocence. These are difficult images to incorporate into a modern film, while also keeping the logic of the circus alive. An idea that lies behind all my characters was that nobody felt in their place, that all of them thought they should be somewhere else – be or play somebody else – except Lucien, who wanders because he was unable to ask himself these questions. Gervaise, and in another way Ethel too, help Lucien to develop and emancipate. They both represent a way out, but both in different directions.

MUSIC

The role of music in the film is not to stir emotions, but rather to create a chorus, or to create a track to guide the way. I love choosing the music myself and creating a sonic cocktail that might look weird on paper but fits the world on screen well. For example, there are old acapella songs and texts that used to be sung in 18th century Flanders when traveling. I included some circus music borrowed from Danny's plays, along with some waltzes and polkas composed specifically for the film. We also used some beautiful North-Korean themes, an old Mozart recording from a phonograph, some Edvard Grieg played by a big-band, and, of course, there is some dancing. To me, the melodies of a film are like fellow passengers on a bus; they accompany you on your journey.

IMAGE

When doing my research, I came across early color pictures that were taken in autochrome. They were a visual revelation. Shots by Austrian photographer Heinrich Kühn were a true inspiration, as well as Belgian pioneers like Florent van Hoof, Alfonse Van Besten and Paul Sano. I was also intrigued by amateur pictures taken by Flemish writer Stijn Streuvels: of farms and farmers, of faces, workplaces, and of landscapes. I combined these daily snapshots with themes that were very popular with Flemish painters of the time. There was a brief expressionist movement that liked to combine rural farm settings with circuses, theater and tragicomic figures, as seen in works by Floris Jespers, Gust De Smet, Frits Van den Berghe, Gustave Van de Woesteyne and Edgard Tytgat.

Everything is important but I find that there is often an obsession with the camera that distracts us from other areas of importance. Since I have a theatrical background in dance and opera, I always find myself trying to balance different elements. For me, the image is even stronger if it can exist without the camera. Sometimes this way of working scares the cameraperson, but to me, the camera's function includes creating things that we do not see, a world outside of the image. Maybe it's a bit abstract. It's very intuitive. I think the image doesn't exist until the film is complete. I believe the only function images have in cinema is to follow the previous image and to precede the subsequent one. That's the beauty of cinema. A beautiful image without context has no value. I find my pictures beautiful because they are part of a larger context. And, above all, I embrace imperfections.

Making the Magnet Man : The Visual Universe

BY NATALIA TREVIÑO, PRODUCTION DESIGNER

For years, Gust had been collecting images and inspiration for this project. It made me think of Jacques Prévert's words: "Men rarely love beauty, they pursue it." It was quite magical to see how naturally the setting began to take shape. Our moodboards were full of documentary photography from the early 20th century and the beginning of the First World War, the traveling entertainment scene of the time, stills from films like Fellini's I CLOWNS, De Sica's MIRACOLO A MILANO, Carnet's LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS and illustrations by Roberto Innocenti from Casa del Tempo, a book that tells the story of a house from 1900 to 1999 from the perspective of its stones. Innocenti's book and The Adventures of Pinocchio, also illustrated by Innocenti, were the starting points in the visual research and became very important documents for us to imagine the world around Lucien. We wanted to create spaces that would both witness the changes in Lucien's life all while evolving independently. It was important for us to have enough contrast between his house and the exterior world to reveal his suppressed talents and desires.

To translate the 20th century Flemish setting into our film, I felt the need to develop a historical context that could work in parallel with Lucien's conscience: a before and after in his own internal conflict. The designs for Lucien and Ethel's houses were based on Stijn Streuvels' photographs from the 1900s portraying farmhouse life, visits to the Flemish countryside, and research on materials and textures from the period.

Illustration by Roberto Innocenti, from "The Adventures of Pinocchio" (1988)

The construction and painting team were key in achieving that natural look. Thanks to Edouard Pallardy Van Parys, our scenic painter, and Raphael Thiry, our head of carpentry, we discovered that Flanders had its own system of bricklaying. It was very important for me to go into these details. I remember having fascinating conversations with the head of lighting, Gilbert Degrand, in order to develop our own suitable light sources. For the light and color treatment, we were inspired by autochrome color photography, for example, Heinrich Kühn's photographs. The color saturation was important from the scene design to the making of props.

The traveling theater/circus scene from the turn of the 20th century brings the ideal visual contrast to widen our color palette, all these colors that Lucien was not used to seeing in his daily life. Every film has its own translation of a certain period of time and it was a challenge to bring all the locations and settings together, but with an amazing art department the project found its shape. We were fortunate to be able to take inspiration directly from the Circus Ronaldo, which had documented its own history. Those images were key to developing our traveling theatre. We even used their original backdrops, painted by Danny's great uncle.

The houses and the circus were confined to a very limited space, in an abandoned factory that we used as a "studio". We had to find the suitable exterior locations matching the world we were creating in our studio. The real locations gave us the visual tools to expand our world and find the connections between them.

In the beginning, we were thinking of a few different scale models that we could use in different parts of the film. I had a few sketches and a compilation of digital research, from Flemish farmhouses to Ukrainian landscapes. During the process, it became clear that this would be the beginning of the film and together with the talented Paul Biwer, the model maker, we came up with the idea of using two different scales in the same model, which perhaps scared the production team a little bit, but not Paul and I. We had time to do some tests with the camera department and changed the scale to achieve the necessary shots.

While Paul was working on the model, we were also locking our real locations - the train station and the cemetery. I provided him with the measurements and images so he could begin to make the model versions.

Illustration by Roberto Innocenzi from the book "Casa Del Tempo"

In the life-size sets, we had to find the right position for our houses in order to have enough distance for the camera, but the crucial point was to find the right place for our enormous sky backdrop and have the space to be able to light it. The first question was: printed or hand-painted? For timing reasons, we had to print it. Personally, this was my biggest challenge in the whole production. To design and print a huge Belgian sky involved a lot of back and forth with our graphic designer, Karen Ardila, who after many drafts and sketches using existing photography that I provided, ended up drawing and painting each cloud. The next challenge was the printing process which we were very apprehensive about, because we were told that there was a risk that the big print would have either too much green or too much magenta. Once the backdrop was hanging and the camera department was happy with it, I could finally relax.

To add to the Flemish scenery, we had to look for the right flora surrounding the houses. After looking in France and Luxembourg for Flemish-looking willows, nothing came close enough to these majestic trees. In Belgium, our prop hunter, Dries Vanoirbeek, had found two real willows that we were allowed to bring on set. This was a huge operation, involving special trailers for transportation and a big crane to put them in place. They were two trees that were not going to get much attention, but we managed to squeeze them into an exterior shot of the circus, when Lucien is being displayed as the Living Magnet in a cage. Poor Lucien, but my heart smiles every time I see those willows in the background.

Portrait of Danny Ronaldo

AN INTERVIEW BY PHILIPPE BOBER

Philippe Bober: Is there a Belgian circus tradition?

Danny Ronaldo: Yes, but like the country itself, the Belgian circus has changed a lot over time. In the course of its history, the country has been under the rule of the Spaniards, the French, the Dutch, and the Germans which resulted in an enormous mixture of cultures. In the same way, the influences of the Belgian circus extend to other artistic domains such as dance, music or theater. The two World Wars also revolutionized circus traditions. After World War II especially, American influences changed the circus spirit, ringing with it big shows with big orchestras, sequins and glamor. All the spirit of Flanders, where I live, the poetic subtlety and melancholy was lost in the 1950s and 1960s. When I was born, the circus in the 1970s was terrible. The circus had become a very commercial world of garish colors. The tradition of the Belgian circus is very rich, drawing its roots from medieval and Renaissance shows, like the Italian commedia dell'arte, but much has been lost. In the 1980s, the circus audience consisted mostly of families who wanted to buy popcorn and applaud a red-nosed clown.

In the 1990s, my brother and I were fed up with this circus spirit dedicated especially to children, who are easy victims of the trade. Having come from a family of circus artists of six generations, we wanted to take back our heritage. So, we went back in time and rediscovered what our ancestors had done and what the real spirit of the trade had been in our family. We started a circus that was much closer to the theater, to the commedia dell'arte and its fine music.

There was a risk of losing spectators, but we managed to create a new audience that loves our commedia circus style, especially in Belgium but also in Europe at theater and circus festivals. At first,

it was not easy to move in this direction, so I understand very well that my parents were worried. We were young, we felt we wanted to do something differently, but we were unable to explain what.

I imagine that it was your grandfather who was at the head of the family circus until the Second World War and that the Americanization took place at the time of your parents?

My great-grandfather was the last director. By the way, it was a theater and not a circus at the time. It was a mobile, wooden theater with trailers, playing shows like 'The Three Musketeers' and 'Around the World in 80 Days'. The Second World War took place at the time of my grandparents and they lost a lot of material. After the war, my grandmother and my father returned to the commercial shows, to the American shows. I cannot say that we lost a lot because I understand that it was not easy to survive as an artist at that time. I respect the work of that generation, but it is true that we have lost the strength of our roots.

When did you start performing?

I started performing very young, around the age of four or five. At 16, I had enough money to do a show in a tent that was never silent, there was always the sound of children. I learned that this feeling of frustration, when you love to do something but feel that something is missing, is the best way to discover something new. I have always been a circus artist who loves the traditional circus. I have never been able to leave it completely because I really love traditional clowns like the original Grock, or Zavatta in France. Whatever work I do, I always include a little circus.

This is your first time acting in a film, how was the first meeting with Gust?

It was odd. He told our agent that he wanted to see a show because he was looking for a circus tent and old-fashioned trailers for his film. He came to see my solo show, and after that he did not say much. Two days later, he came back and said that he was looking for trailers dating back to the early 20th century and that our trailers, being from the 1940s/1950s, were too new. He also added that I had to play the character of Lucien. It was a surprise because I had not considered it. It made me a little scared because I really need an audience. Even at the theater or at the circus, I do not like doing rehearsals. That's the only thing I do not like about my job; it's very difficult to feel what works in a show without the audience. They are the directors of the show. Communication with the public is essential for me. For example, for my solo show, I did more than thirty previews over a period of three months, with a full marquee, before doing the first show. I modified and adapted the show between each trial. Gust told me that I should not worry, that he understood how I am, and that it would work.

I fully trusted him that we would find a way. I quickly realized that my way of performing was quite close to the experience of filming. I learned a lot from Gust. For example, he would always tell me to do less. After a few scenes, I told him that if I were to do even less, I wouldn't be doing anything at all. He said, "Yes, exactly, you mustn't do anything, you mustn't act. You have to let everything around you act". This sentence immediately opened a window of possibilities to improve my acting style. I think we learn very quickly when we do something we enjoy.

Was the film shot chronologically?

Yes, it helped me to understand the evolution of Lucien's character, because it's hard for me to play something without knowing why I'm playing it. At the circus, I am always the director, the actor, the choreographer, I am everything.

Was it difficult for you to find time for the shoot?

It was difficult for financial reasons. My company is quite famous in Belgium and in Europe, but all our income goes into keeping the circus running. There are no public subsidies for the circus in Belgium. So, it was difficult to take two months off without doing a show.

Did you participate in the design of the circus numbers in the film?

A little, but I was surprised by how quickly the shooting advanced. After three weeks of shooting, I really tried to change the way I worked in order to anticipate the gags that had to be shot and prepare them a little. I think that at the time of Chaplin or Buster Keaton's films, when it was very physical and very strong, they spent a lot more time trying things out. I love the fact that no gag stands by itself in the film, each of them is also a key to the next scene. I find this very powerful. Gust has mastered this. I haven't seen many films in which each joke leads to something new, in terms of emotion or narration. That's what I often miss in the circus of today: there are a lot of jokes that don't lead anywhere, they're only there to amuse people.

Did the atmosphere of the shoot make you think of a circus troupe?

Yes, especially on the days when we shot outdoors, in the countryside. They really reminded me of the atmosphere of the circus, with a small team traveling with people arriving and leaving along the way. Everyone was looking for the ideal harmony necessary to do a good job, which is also very important for circuses. Not only did I feel at home, but I also learned a lot.

I'm under the impression that the most difficult part was probably to play a simple-minded character.

That's right. When it was too simple it really did not work because we couldn't sympathise with him. The right balance requires subtlety, which is hard to find. For me, the figure of the simple-minded person is close to the character of the clown. What is important for this character is to be able to suggest that he is not

quite where he is meant to be because he is too simple or naive. If one strives too far from this idea then one starts to lack emotion. For example, it was necessary to make Lucien's love for Gervaise feel like everything was within his reach, that he was very close to happiness, but that he did not see it. But Lucien grows up during the film, he becomes more of an adult.

Is there something of you in Lucien's character?

I think I made him a little more romantic maybe, a little deeper, a little more loaded with past emotions. From the very beginning of the film he has this melancholic sadness that I think comes a little from me. He laughs very rarely. I do not think Lucien is unhappy but he never really smiles! There is a Flemish singer who I like very much, who wrote a song that says: he had never understood why he was happy without ever having fun. He wonders what's wrong with him. I always liked this song because I sympathize with it.

Selected filmography

THE MAGNET MAN
2023 - Belgium, France, Netherlands

CINEMA MALFAIT
2020 - Belgium

FIDELIS FORTIBUS
2015 - Europe - Cultural Prize by the City of Barcelona

SWING
2018 - Europe

LA CUCINA DELL'ARTE
2003 - Europe, Australia, New Zealand

CULTURAL AMBASSADOR
Flanders, Melechen

Biography
Danny Ronaldo

Danny Ronaldo belongs to the sixth generation of one of the most famous and notorious circus families in Belgium. The roots of the current Circus Ronaldo go back to the mid-19th century, when his forefather Adolf Peter Van den Berghe founded his own circus company, together with his beloved spouse Maria Cronenberg.

In 1971, a new circus was founded by the Van den Broeck brothers. A few years later the company was renamed 'Circus Ronaldo', after Jan Van den Broeck's stage name Johnny Ronaldo. His children, Danny 'Solo' and David 'Patatje', chose to join the traveling circus life. In 1995, the brothers would bring a new artistic twist to the circus company by reverting to the choreographic tradition of their forefathers. With the now legendary show 'La Cucina dell'Arte', David and Danny perform in more than 20 countries and continue to amaze new audiences with age-old clown formulae. In 1998, the circus was named the Cultural Ambassador of Flanders, and was described by the press as "the missing link between traditional circus and the contemporary art of circus".

Selected filmography

THE MAGNET MAN
2023 - Belgium, France, Netherlands

THE BOOK OF VISION
2020 - Italy. UK, Belgium

TWO GIRLS
2018 - USA

BORIS SANS BÉATRICE
2016 - Canada

BORGIA
2011-2014 - France, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic

FAUST
2011 - Russia

Biography
Isolda Dychauk

Isolda Dychauk was born in Surgut, Western Siberia on February 4th, 1993. Her first high-profile film was the lead role in FAUST (2011), directed by Russian auteur Aleksandr Sokurov, which won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival. Following the film's success, she was cast in her first English-language project, the international series BORGIA (2011-2014), produced by Tom Fontana. Since then, she has gone on to work with Athina Rachel Tsangari, Denis Côté, Gust Van den Berghe, amongst others. Her latest film, THE BOOK OF VISION (2020), co-starring Charles Dance and executive produced by Terrence Malick, premiered at the Venice Film Festival.

Filmography

THE MAGNET MAN
2023 - Belgium, France, Netherlands

LUCIFER
2014 - Mexico, Belgium

BLUE BIRD
2011 - Belgium, France

LITTLE BABY JESUS OF FLANDR
2010 – Belgium

Biography
Gust Van den Berghe

Gust Van den Berghe was born in Belgium in 1985. With a background in theatre, opera and dance, he studied filmmaking at the School of Audiovisual Art of Brussels.

His graduate film LITTLE BABY JESUS OF FLANDR premiered at the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes in 2010. He returned to Cannes the following year with his second film BLUE BIRD: a timeless tale shot in Togo and dipped in the color blue. With his 2014 film LUCIFER, which premiered at the Rome International Film Festival, he developed a circular film format called 'Tondoscope'.

THE MAGNET MAN is his fourth film. He currently works as a professor at the fiction department of RITSC in Brussels and is preparing his new feature film.

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