



CRÉATION

The Villains Runway

Bad people who do bad things
and to whom bad things will happen

ALYSSA TZAVARAS

Production

Théâtre de Liège
DC&J Création

Coproduction

Le Varia, Théâtre les Tanneurs,
la Comédie de Caen - CDN
(en cours)

**CRÉATION
THÉÂTRE DE LIÈGE
JANUARY 24, 2027**



Biography

After graduating from the Sorbonne Nouvelle with a degree in Performing Arts, Alyssa Tzavaras trained as an actress at the Cours Florent in Paris, where she staged her first show: Witkiewicz's *Le Fou et la Nonne*, which won an award at the Automnales of the school. In 2014, she was admitted to the Conservatoire du XIXe Arrondissement and created the Collectif La Mutinerie with fellow actors she met during her performing study. Passionate about directing work, she went on to sign *Les Enfants de l'An 2000*, presented during the

“Conservatoires en Scène” at the Théâtre du Rond Point, as well as *Superdiscount*, at l'Amour (Bagnolet).

In 2016, she was admitted to INSAS directing program in Brussels. During this period, she co-founded with Joseph Olivennes, La Grande Hâte - Festival de Théâtre en Plein Air, in Burgundy, to extend her artistic approach beyond the academic framework. She revisits works from the repertoire in her own way, including Molière's *Dom Juan* - also presented at the “Courants d'Air” Festival in Brussels - Feydeau's *Le Dindon*, Schiller's *Les Brigands*, Musset's *Lorenzaccio*, Nicolai Erdmann's *Le Suicidé*, Chekhov's *La Mouette*, Labiche's *Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon* and Feydeau's *Le Circuit*. The last edition of the festival saw over 6,000 spectators in 10 days. She also works as an assistant or artistic collaborator alongside other artists, including Aurore Fattier, on several projects.

In Brussels, she presents a short form titled *Superjackpot* in November 2021, followed by *Paradis Fin de Règne*, a full-length creation in March 2023 at Théâtre Les Tanneurs.

Distribution

Concept and direction Alyssa Tzavaras

Dramaturgy Sabine Durand

Assistant Marie Lacroix

With Lucie Guien, Anthony Ruotte, Marie Bos (in progress)

Set Design (in progress)

Lighting Design Lionel Ueberschlag

Sound Design Stéphane Diskus

Costumes (in progress)

Direction technique (in progress)

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Synopsis

Now a “has-been”, an elite group of corrupt rich and disgraced ambitions are launching their own haute couture “brand” to shape the world in their own image. They hope their success will bring them back into the limelight. But when a polar vortex of unprecedented magnitude disrupts their inauguration party, they discover, to their cost, that one disaster never came alone... From disaster to disaster, their dreams of glory turn to nightmare.

Calendar

September 2025: Two-week workshop session within the XS Festival, organized by Les Tanneurs (Brussels, Belgium), followed by a public presentation of the work in progress.

2026: Min 4 weeks of rehearsals and residencies (TBD)

January 2027: Three-week rehearsal period at the Théâtre de Liège.

January 24, 2027: Premiere at the Théâtre de Liège.

Intent

The first fram that came to my mind was of a central table around which world leaders gathered, smoking, in the darkness. A few days later, I heard a priest declaim: “... do not sink into Le Conseil des Méchants. My creative process was set in motion, assembling seemingly unrelated intuitions. Like an exquisite corpse, these disparate elements revealed the beginnings of a fable.

Entitled *Le Conseil des Méchants* (*The Villains Runway*), it takes the form of a satirical tale about the excesses of our modern Western world, at its most delirious. The title, evocative and ambivalent, resonates in two possible ways: the council as an assembly of people, and the council as a given opinion. In this way, the show opens with a meeting between the protagonists and ends with an easy-to-remember advice: “Freedom, it seems, is nothing more than the distance between the hunter and his prey”. The “Villains” are rich people who, out of ultra-narcism, vanity and boredom, decide to launch their own haute couture label to shape the world in their own image. They hope to become immortal, frozen in an image that will remain eternal. These characters embody caricatures of ourselves, and the tale becomes a satire of our darkest and most disturbing human behaviors. However, the message is deliberately ambiguous and ambivalent, in order to elicit laughter as well as horror, without ever teaching a lesson. The play’s function is to serve as an outlet, allowing me to unfold a sumptuous, decadent universe plagued by all manner of derangement.

I chose haute couture as my passion for “villains”, because it gives me the opportunity to express dysfunction. This universe allows me to set up a complex and flawed theatrical machinery through a metatheater : the characters transform a slaughterhouse into a reception hall for their spectacular fashion show. In this way, the manipulation of sets, artifice and precious collections amplifies the impact of the incidents that occur. It also allows me to embrace the Baroque in all its splendor, with its pomp, materials and plurality. Finally, haute couture, as an elitist microcosm, embodies various aspects of our social relations: a restricted circle of people imposes the codes of the future on the rest of the world. From this perspective, extremely violent power dynamics are woven between the various characters, creating oppositions between men and women, humans and animals, leaders and executors, and so on. These sharply defined and accentuated contrasts push the caricature of polarization and world domination to the extreme.

Like a link between each of my creations, the notion of “catastrophe” occupies a central place here. In its broadest sense, catastrophe takes many forms, from the infinitesimally small to the disproportionately large, and from the thematic to the staged. In the first instance, it’s a climatic catastrophe that creates a chaotic backdrop, and gives rise to obstacles disrupting the infernal mechanics that the characters are trying to maintain, as best they can. This external incident throws unexpected obstacles in the protagonists’ path, reinforcing the comic effect. The catastrophe then materializes in the form of theatrical events. These impact both the actors’ performance and the surrounding set-up, marked by constant failures and misfires. This creates a discrepancy between the breadth of the themes addressed and the smallness of the concrete problems facing the protagonists.

In short, a theater of catastrophe is celebrated in a joyous trance, giving life to a baroque, spectacular and polymorphous work; so that, in the end, through the artifice, a form of truth emerges.

Interview Alyssa Tzavaras, *The Villains Runway*

It's often said, that to better understand an artist's creation, you have to look back at the one that preceded it: what links your previous and first shows, *Paradis Fin de Règne* and *The Villains Runway*?

There are obviously similarities with my previous work, both in my approach to creation and in my desire to explore previously explored themes in greater depth or refine my own aesthetic. I believe that, as an artist, you always gravitate towards the same obsessions, even if they can take different forms. In this sense, I'm reminded of Martine Wijckaert's statement: "Each work of art is only the draft of the next; an artist is only revising his copy, tirelessly."

In *Paradis Fin de Règne*, I chose as my setting a ruined theater where artists struggled to survive despite its imminent closure. They ended up reproducing among themselves the same relationships of domination as those they were fighting. The show questioned the dialectic between Art and Power, and the shortcomings of humanity in the face of the latter. In *The Villains Runway*, these questions resurface, but from a different angle: this time, it's those who hold Power who seek to seize Art, in order to shape the world according to their desires. However, this dynamic is not the sole focus of the show.

What other themes will run through *The Villains Runway*?

I don't know if they're really themes, but from these protagonists who hold power, issues of corruption, cruelty and revenge also emerge. Above all, they seek immortality through the "brand" they create - in this case, their haute couture line. Yet we realize that they are just as lost as we are in the face of the great existential questions, grappling with death, love and so on...

On the one hand, then, there's the quest for the ideal, the dream, the delirium around all-consuming ambition; on the other, their various failures, which bring them back to their own finitude, limitations and incapacities... These rich people are, in reality, has-beens, losers, because the catastrophe that relentlessly strikes them inevitably brings them back to their own finitude. This notion of failure was already at the heart of my previous work - probably because, at the time, I'd just left school and dreaded failure myself! But there's something beautiful and profoundly human in failure ; nothing is perfect, especially not a work of art...

The title of your show might also suggest that you want to tackle the question of wickedness?

Let's just say it's not a theme, but rather an intention. Today, we often tend to reduce things to a simplistic moral judgment: "it's right or it's wrong". I try to distance myself from this reductive, sometimes authoritarian approach. My aim is not to defend or condemn them, but to play with these figures. The idea is to blur our bearings, to plunge the viewer into moral uncertainty, to go beyond the Manichean dichotomy between "good and evil", and show that our judgments can sometimes be too hasty. I place my characters in situations where they embody "wickedness" and commit "evil", while at the same time opening up a space of complexity that allows us to develop a form of empathy. Ironically, I'd like the characters we judge the least to turn out to be the cruelest. So my ambition is to create a deeply ambiguous, amoral show in response to this modern trend.

Is the archetype a way of magnifying features to make them easier to observe?

Yes, because *The Villains Runway* is first and foremost a satire of the contemporary world. Satire, through its excessiveness, criticizes prevailing mores, exposes their absurdities and prompts us to reflect, dividing us in ourselves, without offering clear answers. It is a monstration of our own behaviors - which are not exclusively linked to the rich - but touch on what is most essentially human and complex. We are never simply good or bad; yet society often pushes us towards individualism, towards wanting to get ahead by crushing others. The satirical genre plays a cathartic role for the audience, while encouraging us to reflect on aspects of our condition over which we might ultimately have some control. But, above all, I see satire as an outlet: it allows us to laugh at horrors, to laugh at our human condition - which I find very funny! At least, I need to laugh!

More than just satire, aren't there also elements of farce?

What gives this project a "farcical" dimension is both its popular and spectacular aspect - I want it to speak to everyone, not just artists - and its ridiculous and laughable side, with totally absurd or unexpected situations.

I was recently talking to a friend about the project, explaining that I wanted to play with the codes of comedy, but he didn't seem too keen. To him, it seemed a bit disparaging, or not quite right, in relation to the project I wanted to carry out. Comedy is often perceived as light and sometimes a little superficial. In reality, I think there's something noble in the genre, and I don't think it's impossible to reconcile comedy and reflection. It's a question of balance: finding the right way to combine all the elements, while playing with the very codes of comedy.

Is it also a way of questioning the medium of theater? Not to make theater within theater, but to get closer to a meta-theatrical form?

Meta-theatricality becomes unavoidable as soon as we take into artistic consideration the fact that the actors are playing a role and are not really the characters they claim to be. With *The Villains Runway*, I'm still thinking about the theatrical device, the concept that will encompass the story. By its very nature, theater creates distance, and I want to play with that: to show the mechanisms of theater and work with the other side of the stage. However, I haven't yet fully clarified this question for this show. It's crucial to define the necessity of this process; otherwise, it could become anecdotal, or serve only to link narrative fragments that wouldn't otherwise hold together.

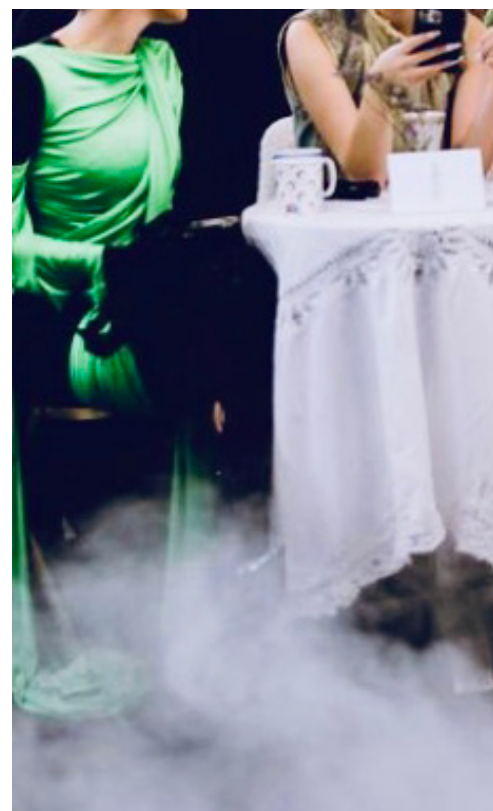
Is choosing haute-couture as the subject of your show - or at least one of the subjects - also a way of emphasizing form?

Haute-couture embodies many contemporary contradictions, both thematically and aesthetically. It reflects the power dynamics between the sexes, being one of the few fields where women wield significant power yet are sometimes scorned and coerced.

Aesthetically, it offers a fascinating terrain for exploring costumes, materials, colors and light. I'm a particular admirer of Alexander McQueen, whose collections are true works of art. Far from the simple fashion show, he has reinvented the medium to create true "works of illusion", as he likes to call them. This approach inspired me to develop a story in which the protagonists themselves stage the opening night of their first fashion show, creating a *mise en abîme*.

**Aesthetics in the theater are instinctively associated with set design.
How do you conceive of it?**

I like to develop busy, complex set designs, with visible machinery and extensive scenic devices to create a spectacular, almost artificial effect. The term "baroque" aptly describes what I'm trying to achieve: this style, with its dream-like themes, multiple *mise en abîme* and charged aesthetic, uses elements that seemingly have nothing in common, but which clash. For *The Villains Runway*, I thought it would be daring to set the characters in an extravagant location: a disused abattoir. Placing the show in this location seemed right to me, as if decrepitude was in vogue or the underground was at the height of style. It also raises questions about haute-couture's relationship with the animal cause, as I imagine this abattoir as the place where they would have slaughtered the animals for their collection, but this idea has yet to be explored.



**THÉÂTRE
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