



Rob interviewing Yan Serre about his trips to the Himalayas

Yan: Népalsolo is a project to go alone, without porter, without communication and alone in Himalayas during one month in winter.

Rob: That is quite a challenge.

Yan: Yeah, it was.

Rob: Why did you choose to do that?

Yan: Because I like to be alone, and I would like to try something really strong about silence, to be alone during one month and also to discover Tibetan Buddhism.

Rob: Because I think you are a practicing Buddhist?

Yan: Yeah, I am not exactly Buddhist but I am practicing, yes, Tibetan Buddhism.

Rob: Did you find that helped you in your journey?

Yan: Yes, for sure. You have a lot of Tibetan monks who escaped from China and the Tibetan part is from China now and they came in the part of Nepal by the border from unrest and they have a lot of monasteries, yeah.

Rob: And so you were able to visit them more easily, or ...?

Yan: What was really strange for me was the monastery was closed when I arrived during winter and I just learned at this moment that monks go lower and lower altitude because it is too cold during winter. And the monastery was closed but actually it maybe sometimes people say it is because of my good karma the door opened each time because you have always a few people who stay there, for older people because they cannot go down because you have no possibility to go by horse or this kind of

Rob: There's no travelling, you, they can't move.

Yan: Exactly. So if you are too old you cannot move at all so you have to stay where you are and the younger monks, a few of the younger monks, just stay there to be sure the older people are in good shape.

Rob: They look after the older people.

Yan: Exactly.

Rob: So you set yourself a very difficult challenge to go in winter. How did you manage? Did you get on okay or did you have difficulties?



- Yan: I had a lot of difficulties and I don't know how to say that in English, I just "frôler la mort".
- Rob: I was very close to death.
- Yan: Yes, I was very close to death because of another name I don't know, I got something with my lungs.
- Rob: Your lungs – from the altitude perhaps?
- Yan: Exactly. Exactly.
- Rob: So you came away a wiser person. How did you feel after your journey? Because ...
- Yan: After the journey it was very strange to go back to civilisation and you know that Kathmandu is a city very crowded ...
- Rob: Crowded, yeah.
- Yan: ... and, and with a lot of pollution in the air and it was very strange to go back at civilisation with those conditions after one month alone in silence.
- Rob: One month alone, I mean it is very, very dangerous.
- Yan: Sometimes it was. I think I don't really realise when I go there how it will be difficult and how it could be dangerous, so I just discover it when I was there.
- Rob: You're a crazy guy (laughing).
- Yan: Maybe, I don't know (laughing).
- Rob: But like you say you have a good karma so everything came out okay.
- Yan: Yeah, yeah and I go there another time, another time and next, last time I was there it was for two months.
- Rob: And you do the same thing, walking alone?
- Yan: Ah, yeah. And I spend one month up at 4,500 meters during one month.
- Rob: You're telling me that you work very close to Everest?
- Yan: Yeah, yeah so close.
- Rob: You can't just climb the mountain?
- Yan: Yeah, yeah. During winter you can go up and you can go to Everest base camp. The best you can do is that during winter because it is really too cold and you



have absolutely nobody there. And when you arrive in the Everest Park from Nepal you have somebody who just is asking you for your permit.

Rob: You need a permit to go?

Yan: Yeah.

Rob: Okay.

Yan: And you gather a kind of tableau.

Rob: A panel?

Yan: Oh yeah, for people who are already in the park. And during winter when I arrived there were maybe we were 30 or 40 people, not more. And when you go there during tourism season it is more.

Rob: You must have noticed how the place changes as a result of tourism?

Yan: Ah, yeah. Not now because of virus so you have no people at all actually but during ten years we can say we have a lot of people who go there just to go to see the Everest base camp. So from now it I think that people will go.

Rob: Perhaps in a way it's a good thing because it is a very polluted place I understand.

Yan: Yes, I was very, very surprised to see cans of coca and a lot of things were polluted at the base camp so when they stay there before they just left everything they bring with them so actually the Nepalese government just make a load to ask people to get down everything that they get.

Rob: To take everything away with them?

Yan: Yeah, because after they just left it like this.

Rob: And it gets filthy.

Yan: Yes, it is just awful. You have a lot of things that are really strange in this place. I don't really like the Everest base camp. It was strange to see a place in very extreme nature and you have a lot of pollution there.

Rob: Yeah, yeah.

Yan: It is very strange. You have to mind about it and about pollution and about ecology.

Rob: Yes, yes. And in fact you are part of the problem.



- Yan: Yes, yes because I go there also. So you have to be responsible as possible when you go there and respect nature and people who are living there for so long, so long a time.
- Rob: I think if I understand it right you have found a way of covering distance of surviving when you are walking, you have a sort of meditation?
- Yan: Yeah, yeah. At first it was also to do meditation and yoga and in extreme conditions but from that ...
- Rob: You did yoga in the Himalayas?
- Yan: Yeah, the higher I go is just under 6,000.
- Rob: So, so what is it that motivates you to do these crazy things?
- Yan: Spiritually really.
- Rob: Explain that a little bit.
- Yan: Just to discover how you are in very difficult conditions and how you are physically but also spiritually.
- Rob: To put yourself to the test?
- Yan: Yeah, a kind of test, yes. And I really think that if you really want to progress in spirituality sometimes you have to do something really hard and that what also Tibetan Buddhism say. Sometimes you have to push yourself very, very far inner and outer.
- Rob: Do you think this can still apply here in Brittany? I mean you are talking about a very extreme place. We are here in Brittany, how do you manage here?
- Yan: Really well. You have to be good everywhere you are. You just have to think about someone like Mr. Mandela who spent 27 years in a jail. And I am sure it was just great, it's just incredible to say that but I think he has this capacity to be great everywhere he is. And finally, he just became the president of his country so it is just crazy, and you can see by this way that sometimes extreme situation can open your heart and open your mind to very, very new challenges.
- Rob: Can you suggest any challenge that our listeners could attempt here, because let's face it, we are talking about Brittany here and you are talking about Nepal, a long way away but you are also talking about something internal, aren't you?
- Yan: Yeah, yeah sure.
- Rob: So, do you have any suggestions? Or challenges?



- Yan: Yes, I think you can push yourself everywhere you are. You don't need to be in the Himalayas and in very high mountains and during winter. That is what also I discovered during this trip, both trips, is that you can push yourself everywhere you are and in every condition and maybe in your own bedroom, just by meditation and trying to find by your very truly way...
- Rob: A true way, yeah ...
- Yan: ... who you are but very deeply and you can do that everywhere and anytime and just that you have to do it by yourself and sometimes you can also be helped by other people who did the same thing I did.
- Rob: Well, I think already standing here in Rostrenen at the market on a very cold windy morning it is also quite a challenge.
- Yan: Sometimes it's a challenge because as you can see nobody is there and you just have to spend four or five hours just to wait, but sometimes you do a very, very beautiful meet, rencontre ...
- Rob: Meeting, yeah you meet someone interesting and ...
- Yan: Yes, really.
- Rob: Well, it has been really interesting talking to you, Yan, and thank you very much indeed.
- Yan: You're welcome.