**Broadcastability – Une conversation with Fabrice Chanut – English transcript**

00;00;00;28 — 00;00;19;23

Fabrice

It’s a new generation we now have around, and they will be the ones making waves. They are able to write, “RHWS with accommodation, so what? You want me to work and I can do so, but I am going to need a desk. It is going to need to be accessible. And how much will I be paid each month?” While we were still at, “Thank you for offering me a job!”

00;00;19;26 - 00;00;48;06

Chloë

Welcome to Broadcastability, a podcast for, by and about people with disabilities in the workplace. This project is part of our PROUD project with the University of Toronto. You can find more information on our website: theproudproject.ca

00;00;48;09 - 00;01;18;02

Isabelle

The PROUD project is based at the University of Toronto on the traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat Peoples, the Seneca and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. We would also like to recognize all the other autochthone territories on Turtle Island where we conduct research and are recording this podcast, including the traditional unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh First Nations.

00;01;18;05 - 00;01;44;07

Chloë

Hello, my name is Chloë Atkins. I am the lead researcher for the PROUD Project. I am a political science professor at the University of Toronto, and I conduct research on disability matters. I have an episodic illness myself and therefore have a lot of personal experience with disabilities in the workplace.

00;01;44;09 - 00;02;04;11

Isabelle

Hello. My name is Isabelle Avakumovic-Pointon and I am the research assistant for the PROUD Project. I am a PhD student at the University of British Columbia and I conduct research on the history of people with disabilities. On the personal side, I have invisible disabilities myself.

00;02;04;13 - 00;02;17;26

Isabelle

In this episode, we welcome Fabruce Chanut, director of the show “Vestiaires” on France 2. Fabrice tells us about his journey toward working in television and the power of Medias and arts in order to switch the perspective on disability.

00;02;17;28 - 00;02;31;26

Chloë

And it is quite timely, since Fabrice will be working on the Paralympics in Paris this summer. It should be pointed out that we recorded this episode before the Olympics.

00;02;31;28 - 00;02;42;01

Isabelle

So yes, thank you for coming back on the podcast, Fabrice Chanut. We are glad to welcome you once again.

00;02;42;03 - 00;02;56;07

Chloë

I couldn’t practice my French recently. If I make mistakes, I apologize. Could you tell us about your origins, your upbringing, your family and your roots?

00;02;56;09 - 00;03;28;20

Fabrice

I was born in the Paris region. The thing is I was born with a disability, a hand agenesis, on the right hand. Therefore, I have actually spent all my summers in the hospital until I was 15 years old. I am starting with this because It’s a gateway to… When you spend so much time at the hospital—and I am guessing there could be a lot of people in this situation among your listeners-

00;03;28;22 - 00;03;57;13

Fabrice

Radio, TV and reading can save you. There it is. And so from all this time spent by myself reading, watching movies and listening to music on repeat, I got, let’s say, a deep desire to be able to portray through film. So it was really an escape route. And on top of that, I am 52,

00;03;57;14 - 00;04;23;21

Fabrice

So my peak was happening when Indiana Jones and ET were coming out. All those movies were just starting to show up in France. In the ’80s, at the same time, Mitterrand was elected. Independent radio stations were popping up, and brought a whole body of music coming from you, ladies, from English-speaking countries. That was different from our traditional Joe Dassin, Brassens, etc.

00;04;23;26 - 00;04;49;29

Fabrice

I jumped right into it. Rock music, punk, all these genres did—and Funk music, Michael Jackson—sent us off in a different world. And it’s all of these escape routes… Which were just a dream for me for the longest time, most of them have now come true.

00;04;50;02 - 00;04;57;27

Chloë

When we were talking earlier, you mentioned wearing a turtleneck at all times…

00;04;57;28 - 00;04;59;09

Fabrice

Ah! You remembered that! Exactly.

00;04;59;11 - 00;05;07;03

Chloë

Yes. Can you tell us more about it and about people’s attitudes in France?

00;05;07;05 - 00;05;34;05

Fabrice

Well, when… In the Paris region, where I used to live in Mantes-la-Jolie, in the Yvelines area, people with disabilities, well, it wasn’t that common. I think I was the only person I knew with a disability. Therefore there was always the way other people look at you. I tended to try to hide my little arm and my little shoulder under a big turtleneck sweater.

00;05;34;07 - 00;05;52;11

Fabrice

Yeah. In the Paris region, it works for about 4 or 5 months of the year. The problems started when my parents—well, not a problem, no—to the family’s delight, we moved to the south of France, where it’s quite the opposite. It’s really hot outside for 11 out of 12 months and your turtleneck is useless.

00;05;52;13 - 00;06;16;14

Fabrice

Then I had to jump in, meaning I was forced to wear a T-shirt. I pushed myself to expose my disability and I admit that it was (inaudible) elastic. But there was an elastic. And that was my friend’s kindness and friendship, all these things you discover when you are 15, 16 years old, against the things that make you doubt yourself.

00;06;16;14 - 00;06;40;07

Fabrice

And it actually works. Kindness. There you have the first little friends who still invite you to play soccer when you will… Well, who make you play goalie while you really are not going to stop any goals with half an arm. But it’s all part of life’s beautiful teaching experiences.

00;06;40;09 - 00;07;05;27

Isabelle

And I wanted to ask you to go back to your first answer. When you were spending so much time in the hospital, you were watching a lot of TV and movies, you were listening to the radio. At the time, were there people with disabilities on TV, in the movies and on the radio?

00;07;05;27 - 00;07;12;26

Isabelle

Or wasn’t it in the media at all at the time?

00;07;12;28 - 00;07;40;17

Fabrice

Not at all. You know, traditionally, with Adda who I am writing the show with, we joked that all the references were from “Ironside” and the Ingalls family, with poor Marie who was blind. But because I wasn’t interested in those shows, I would always switch programs. Therefore, I personally think it wasn’t. And the closest character to me at the time was actually E.T.

00;07;40;19 - 00;08;16;06

Fabrice

Yeah. No, indeed, it was… And on top of that, because I was—it’s a paradox but—because I was unable to move, I was drawn to all moving things. Danse, movement, dynamic movies. Action to counterbalance all the time I spent, rehabilitation and boredom in a sense. Then I, and I think it’s the same for all teenagers, It’s not just me and my disability, all teenagers at some point think their life is so much slower than the movies.

00;08;16;09 - 00;08;29;06

Isabelle

That is true. Yes, but it’s interesting that, at that point, there really wasn’t anyone who was just like you, like you said, in movies and shows.

00;08;29;09 - 00;08;50;00

Fabrice

I can even tell you a little story. When we were filming “Vestiaires” at the beginning, two characters… Actually, when we started writing with Adda, we were describing, well, we were telling our story, us as athletes with disabilities. So we were far from disguising the truth. The characters were actually named Adda and Fabrice.

00;08;50;03 - 00;09;25;02

Fabrice

So we wrote a whole lot of situations in which we were using our actual disabilities. For me with my agenesis, there are a bunch of little jokes that we kept that are… I don’t know if you have the reference, but Abraracourcix, there are a lot of elements coming from Asterix and Obelix. Abraracourcix, the play on words like this on short arms, etc., things that we needed to keep. They had an influence when casting the actor who was going to play Fabrice, Orson in the show.

00;09;25;05 - 00;09;50;26

Fabrice

All of this to tell you that it’s thanks to the casting process for “Vestiaires” that I met Alexandre Philippe, who ended up playing as Orson in the show. And it was the first time I had ever met someone with my disability, with the same disability. And at that time I was almost 40, so it was… Well, you are at 40 with something hitting you in the face. It was quite destabilizing and festive.

00;09;50;29 - 00;10;23;12

Isabelle

Yes, I can imagine. So you start engaging a lot with movies and the media during your adolescence. When did you start thinking about it as a career? Not just something you enjoy, something you do to pass the time, but really something you do, something you make… A process you work on as a creative director.

00;10;23;13 - 00;10;43;08

Fabrice

That took a few steps. So, to be precise, I didn’t want to become a director. I wanted to be a special effects specialist. What I was dreaming of was people getting to the moon and all of a sudden, pirates appear. So I was quite into Star Wars, etc.

00;10;43;11 - 00;10;59;22

Fabrice

Therefore, it was a lot of drawing, many comic books and a lot of writing. One day, my father even let me use his—I don’t know if you are familiar with the Super 8 cameras—so we filmed a bunch of little scenes like that.

00;10;59;24 - 00;11;27;29

Fabrice

What happened next is that after graduating high school, I wanted to study cinema. But the level you needed when I was looking to be a special effect specialist in France was extremely complicated. We had already shifted to a digital and computing era, and I had missed the boat.

00;11;27;29 - 00;11;50;17

Fabrice

I was still there picturing play dough, stop motion and optical illusions. But we were far past that. But then I got back up and I thought, “Instead of being, picturing astronauts, we’re going to picture people with disabilities in a locker room, and that will be extraordinary as well!” [laughs]

00;11;50;20 - 00;12;11;09

Isabelle

And while you were thinking about this, dreaming of becoming a special effects specialist, did you have any other jobs, did you start with cinema right away? Or was it more of a journey here and there?

00;12;11;12 - 00;12;46;25

Fabrice

No, it was a journey, a slightly chaotic journey. Let’s say that… I studied, I have my master’s degree in communication with a major in cinema, with a goal of working in cinema. But I studied in a really theoretical branch, extremely theoretical. And then I thought, if I keep going this way, I will, well, I used to say at the time that “I would never roll up a cable, I would never get close to a camera. I would spend my whole life with my nose stuck in a book” etc.

00;12;46;27 - 00;13;15;05

Fabrice

Therefore, what I did was, I am lucky that, here in Marseille, we have the University of Aix-Marseille next door. And in Aubagne, there was a cinema school that was more… More pragmatic. That school is now called STATIS, but at the time they were just filming a small commercial. A whole neighborhood in Aubagne was actually renovated. It’s called “Les Défensions” now.

00;13;15;08 - 00;13;45;13

Fabrice

They needed people to work in animation. They needed a technical team. And they hired me to join the team. That is where I had my first experience, and where I ended up assistant director later on. Yeah. After that position as an assistant director, I struggled a little bit. It wasn’t easy. It was complicated to find work while staying in this area I was still discovering: Marseille, Marseille area.

00;13;45;16 - 00;14;11;27

Fabrice

Yeah, it wasn’t… And even then, I worked for some friends. Actually, I followed [laughs] my ex-wife’s advice. She was telling me that every time I would come home, I wouldn’t stop grumbling about being an assistant director, about the camera not being in the right place, extras not moving like you want them to, etc. Then she said, maybe “Instead of constantly grumbling, you should be directing yourself.”

00;14;11;29 - 00;14;26;27

Fabrice

And that’s how I started writing my first short film. And that’s how it came from, I thought, let’s switch, let’s try to… Get your hands dirty as they say back home.

00;14;26;29 - 00;14;32;25

Chloë

Did you get any support at the time?

00;14;32;28 - 00;15;00;17

Fabrice

Absolutely. I am going to name them Paul Sardou and Christel Baridon. They helped me get to work—Paul Sardou—and Christel Baridon, when they accepted to… Well, when I was writing my short film, I went a bit crazy with it. First, it was about two guys who lived by a pool. Two homeless guys who discovered this abandoned swimming pool in the middle of a heatwave and decided to fix it up and live there by themselves.

00;15;00;19 - 00;15;09;21

Fabrice

But there was that last scene with a helicopter flying around the area and collecting water to

Mais il y avait une séquence finale avec un hélicoptère qui rentrait dans leur zone, qui prenait l’eau pour aller arroser les forêts en plein… en train de brûler à côté.

00 ; 15 ; 09 ; 22 — 00 ; 15 ; 11 ; 07

Chloë

Ah OK.

00 ; 15 ; 11 ; 09 — 00 ; 15 ; 27 ; 24

Fabrice

So when I wrote this, I said, of course, we are going to cut some scenes because I’m not Georges Lucas. And thanks to people like Paul Sardou and Christel Bardon, we kept those scenes. They showed me we could find actors interested in short films. We could keep those scenes.

00;15;28;00 - 00;15;38;19

Fabrice

I am still so grateful to them for actually supporting me.

00;15;38;21 - 00;15;53;24

Fabrice

What’s funny is, while I’m telling you this, I think about it and this sort film resembles what “Vestiaires” ended up looking like. Meaning two guys by the pool talking about their lives. It was pretty much the short film’s plot.

00;15;53;26 - 00;16;09;17

Isabelle

What brought you to this idea of a swimming pool and swimming? Why is it such a big part of “Vestiaires” and maybe a big part of your life as well? What brought you there?

00;16;09;19 - 00;16;51;28

Fabrice

On this, it would take… Truly, it’s like the domino effect, dominoes falling just the right way. First, I really enjoy water, since I lived so close to the Mediterranean Sea, still living… I could just turn the camera over and you would be able to see the sea. So the sea is really important to me, really important. Then, I am not even going to talk about how much I love movies like “Le Grand Bleu” and “Abysse”. And there is also the fact that I started… because I have… I also have asthma—my asthma is my disability—and I was told to start swimming. Then I just fell in love with the sport.

00;16;52;01 - 00;17;22;21

Fabrice

And later on, when… I started to find the role of assistant director complicated, and I started to write the storyline for two films, I was offered to work… Well, actually, I started swimming at a Handisport swimming club in Marseille. There. But really, it was about keeping healthy, fighting my asthma and strengthening my right side, which was deteriorating.

00;17;22;23 - 00;17;48;06

Fabrice

I am not going to go on about how good physical activity is for non-disabled people, and even better for people with a disability, but that was really beneficial to me. Therefore, what happened is the pool crystallized most of my obsessions. Meaning it was a place where, as a person with a disability, your handicap is automatically lighter.

00;17;48;08 - 00;18;04;29

Fabrice

There we go… Every person in a wheelchair will tell you, we are freer, we can thrive in water, we are free to move around. It still is—and that’s part of the “Vestiaires” plot—it is still a place where you get into your bathing suit in front of strangers.

00;18;04;29 - 00;18;34;00

Fabrice

So privacy-wise, it is quite direct. Therefore, once you are pretty much naked in front of others, talking about problems at work, family issues and health problems become so much easier. And there is also… I think it might be parasports in general, and being at the swimming pool, friendliness is extraordinary. So that’s what water and the pool were able to crystallize.

00;18;34;03 - 00;18;50;10

Chloë

I was thinking about “Vestiaires” and locker rooms are a place of metamorphosis. We undress, we get dressed again. You could say we become someone else in those places. What do you think about that?

00;18;50;13 - 00;19;16;20

Fabrice

I am going to run with what you said. I mean that we are always carrying a little bit of boredom, weariness and fatigue. We bring it with us swimming, and as soon are you are floating… Also, we are staying in, we’re in… There is a recreation section and a competition section with a coach. As soon as you get into the coach’s arms and he tells you, we are going for a 200-meter warmup, 400 meters of this, a pyramid, well, I won’t keep going on terms.

00;19;16;22 - 00;19;44;13

Fabrice

Basically, you are already moaning, thinking, “OK, I will… It’ll be hard and I will…” But all of a sudden, all of these worries stay back. And then… When you talk about metamorphosis, this is the one I find the most interesting every time. It’s when you come in with this little weight, this little bag of stones, and when you leave 3 hours later, you can say, “Oh, I… I left my bag of stones on the side of the pool and I feel so much better!” And that is magic. That is pure magic.

00;19;44;16 - 00;19;57;05

Chloë

I think the Olympics are coming this summer, and the Paralympics as well. Will you be part of it in any way, through movies or television?

00;19;57;08 - 00;20;24;20

Fabrice

With “Vestiaires” actually, with “Vestiaires”. So the news… Well, we are lucky that we are recognized in France. We got into the Paralympics a few different ways. First of all with the show, we were asked to—since there is going to be about 10 days of the Paralympics—we filmed around 10 episodes with athletes who will be in the Paralympics.

00;20;24;20 - 00;20;25;25

Chloë

Wow.

00;20;25;27 - 00;20;46;01

Fabrice

So we should have one episode every night about… Well, in a quirky way like we always try to bring, about weightlifting or shooting. How to practice shooting when you are in a wheelchair? What about swimming?

00;20;46;03 - 00;21;06;13

Fabrice

Now, I am not going to get into it; there are 12 episodes. We had Tony Estanguet for one of the episodes. He presented the games, the Paralympic games. Of course, we are very proud to have those 10 episodes on France 2 during the Paralympic games.

00;21;06;16 - 00;21;13;09

Isabelle

That’s so cool to know there was a link between you and the Olympics. That…

00 ;21;13;12 — 00 ;21;14 ;06

Fabrice

It’s so awesome.

00;21;14;06 — 00;21;15;17

Isabelle

Wow, wow.

00;21;15;19 - 00;21;41;14

Fabrice

It’s just awesome. Other fun facts, Adda was chosen to be the torch bearer, so he carried the Olympic flame on Wednesday, last Wednesday. And I was his backup. Being the torch bearer’s backup means that if someone, if a bearer was to sprain an ankle or had Covid, well I was there to take over. But don’t worry, nobody gets sick when you are a torch bearer.

00;21;41;17 - 00;21;48;05

Isabelle

[Laugh] but that’s so cool, you were chosen for this important role!

00;21;48;07 - 00;22;01;19

Fabrice

And on top of that, as you know, the flame got here in Marseille and we are both from Marseille originally. It’s pretty unlikely. The flame comes to our city, it’s right here. I am not going to show you, but it came through here, just about 300 meters on the left. It’s just so unlikely.

00;22;01;21 - 00;22;27;14

Isabelle

Yeah, wow. You said that when you were 15, 16 years old, or before that, when you were in the hospital, there really wasn’t anyone with a disability on television or in the movies. Did you notice a change since then? Would you say there is much more representation now, or even a little bit more? Or?

00;22;27;16 - 00;22;48;28

Fabrice

I feel like there is… So, right now, in the news, between the Paralympics… Theo Curin, do you know Theo Curin? So he’s a young French swimmer—and we are lucky because we have known him since he was young. He came on “Vestiaires”—he got sick and doesn’t have arms or legs.

00;22;49;01 - 00;23;12;03

Fabrice

But he got 4th at the Paralympics. He has, he made a career in television as an actor and he became, he became the flagship for disabilities for part of the population. So he is always asked to talk about his situation. And it’s really great.

00;23;12;05 - 00;23;38;06

Fabrice

What can I tell you about this right now? I talked about the time when “Vestiaires” was released, “Intouchables” did so well at home just when we were coming out. And I am not sure if you know about this, but there is a movie that came out in France, it might get to Canada, called “Un P’tit truc en plus” from a comedian named Arthus.

00;23;38;08 - 00;24;03;28

Fabrice

It’s about these characters who live with people with cognitive problems, intellectual disabilities. And it is starting to, in France we say, “casser la baraque”, it’s a hit. It’s a little bit like the “Intouchables” wave 14–15 years ago. So at this time, there is a lot going on about disabilities in the movies or on television.

00;24;04;00 - 00;24;16;17

Chloë

Is there anyone working with you on “Vestiaires” with a disability? Not just the actors, but other team members?

00;24;16;19 - 00;24;36;18

Fabrice

Other than the actors, Adda, who writes with me… No. It’s a lot of… We needed to keep the door open for non-disabled people. They need to work a little bit. In France, we have this law saying you need to hire at least 6% of non-disabled people every time. So no, other than the actors and Adda, no.

00;24;36;21 - 00;24;48;28

Fabrice

Another fun fact, do you know what is coming to Canada? Do you know about AMI… AMI-TV? They are readapting “Vestiaires”, “Vestiaires” in Montreal.

00;24;49;00 - 00;24;50;08

Isabelle

Ah, I’d love to watch it!

00;24;50;11 - 00;24;55;21

Chloë

Is it the same format? Is it three minutes long? Or is it…?

00;24;55;24 - 00;25;20;01

Fabrice

They played it differently. I mean, they recorded it in 26 minutes format. They connected a few episodes together. And with us, we had three minutes then it was over, but for them, there is this feeling… The character starts in a situation then goes towards another situation and meets someone else, and so on. We were lucky to come to Canada in January or February to watch the shooting.

00;25;20;04 - 00;25;24;12

Isabelle

Montreal in January? It was probably a bit cold!

00;25;24;14 - 00;25;31;18

Fabrice

Yeah, it was a bit cold. But what was great was the decorations were still there. It was pretty Christmassy. Coming from France, where we had 40 degrees, it was…

00;25;31;20 - 00;25;45;19

Isabelle

Yeah, yeah, I can imagine it’s a different climate in the South of France or in Montreal in January. [Laughs] Yes. So you are going international now. Yes, the “Vestiaires” model.

00;25;45;22 - 00;26;08;12

Fabrice

Yes, and we are happy about it because it’s our cousins—as we say in France—our Canadian cousins. And the good thing about it is they did three… They reworked some of the episodes in order to introduce the characters, etc. As you can imagine, even if we know the episodes inside and out, once they go through the Quebecois lens and accent, we get lost.

00;26;08;14 - 00;26;26;19

Fabrice

Some of the episodes we wrote were adapted to the social and economic situation. The fact that we don’t have the same supports, the same institutional journeys. And they fully rewrote some of the episodes on their end. So that’s pretty great.

00;26;26;21 - 00;26;53;01

Isabelle

Yeah, it is really cool to see how… Yes, they adapted it to a different cultural environment, but also, as you said, the assistance and welfare system and the infrastructure. Yes, we spoke to some people with disabilities in Montreal, where they said that the streets are much wider, which makes it easier to drive in the summer. But the winter, however, when there is… It’s…

00;26;53;01 - 00;26;55;11

Chloë

It’s hard. [laughs]

00;26;55;13 - 00;26;56;06

Isabelle

Everything is icy.

00;26;56;06 - 00;27;01;10

Fabrice

Adda didn’t go outside. Adda, he didn’t get out of the hotel much. It was hotel, taxi. [laughs]

00;27;01;12 - 00;27;06;00

Isabelle

Yeah, because it’s really bad. [laughs]

00;27;06;03 - 00;27;13;08

Chloë

It’s possible. I have used a wheelchair in the winter, but it’s different. It’s hard.

00;27;13;10 - 00;27;35;05

Isabelle

Yes, yes. But you mentioned this 6% percent quota. I like that joke, “Yeah, poor non-disabled people, we should really help them, we have to hire the 6% quota”. What do you think of this law in France? The real 6%. Is it… Do you find that it’s helpful, or does it create other problems, or is useless?

00;27;35;07 - 00;27;47;29

Fabrice

On a personal level, I made that joke, but I don’t hear about it much. Yeah, I don’t know. I think at home AGEFIPH deals with it.

00;27;48;01 - 00;28;07;24

Fabrice

Yeah, there isn’t… Because those matters are dealt with internally with AGEFIPH, etc. I don’t have anyone around saying, “I am, I am working in this company because I am part of the 6% of people with disabilities quota.” We know about the law and we use it as a joke to turn the situation around, but not on my level, no.

00;28;07;24 - 00;28;40;01

Fabrice

It’s true that I see people, when they send cover letters and resumes, they are starting to write—how do you call it? —At home, we tell Recognition of the status of disabled workers, RGTH—people write “RQTH without adaptation” to make it clear to the employer that there might be resources available to facilitate employment, help you can get without having to modify every office, every floor, etc.

00;28;40;03 - 00;29;23;04

Isabelle

That is really interesting because, for a start, we don’t have it in Canada, we don’t have this legal quota. We found out that… I am not sure if it is really, outside of France, if other countries also have these quotas. We are still looking into it, but it is interesting to hear that some people will write, “Yes, I have a disability, but I don’t need any accommodations.” Because it is, maybe it is to answer bias or the employer’s first thought that “Ah, it’s going to be expensive, it’s going to be complicated.” Everything you think about when you picture a disability, maybe.

00;29;23;06 - 00;29;44;20

Fabrice

That is what we are trying to… Well, we… I mean public authorities are trying to change because it is… It is a mentality for non-disabled people about people with disabilities in the same position. I mean, in a situation like this, when someone is looking for work, he’s asking himself:

00;29;44;22 - 00;30;05;27

Fabrice

“So, I am going to apply; is this job really for me? I will apply. If this job suits me. If this job suits me, do I tell them that I have a disability? I will apply, but do I say I have a disability on my resume and they won’t call to see me, or maybe I don’t say anything and I get an interview but then the guy will see me coming in with my cane or my wheelchair? What is the right time? There.

00;30;05;29 - 00;30;33;08

Fabrice

When people in our environment are starting to become more aware of disabilities and of what people with disabilities can achieve, I think things start to change. And again, in France, there might be a difference between public institutions who get an injunction from the government to open up, to adapt, and the companies who are on a different logic.

00;30;33;10 - 00;30;42;21

Chloë

On that point, what advice could you give to a young person who wants to work and has a disability?

00;30;42;23 - 00;30;48;02

Isabelle

Especially for a young person who would like to start in the media, a career in the media?

00;30;48;02 - 00;30;49;04

Chloë

Or the arts.

00;30;49;07 - 00;30;50;06

Isabelle

Yeah.

00;30;50;08 - 00;31;12;13

Fabrice

No, but you need to… Of course, we need to support them. We are the living proof that everything is possible. Now, after that… It’s always the same. It’s the empty glass or the glass is either half full or half empty. We need to stay optimistic and say, ‘I want to do this, I am going for it.’

00;31;12;14 - 00;31;37;00

Fabrice

And in our case, we were incredibly lucky with ‘Vestiaires’ and… But we were totally naïve. So now, we realize it at 53 and 54, we went through, we were so incredibly lucky (inaudible) not just to have one season, but to have 13 of them. I would tend to advise young people to go for it and not hesitate.

00;31;37;02 - 00;32;06;08

Fabrice

Now, I would also encourage them to—I don’t know if you have this saying… You will understand—to shield yourself, to protect yourself. Because it’s one thing to go for it thinking, ‘OK, I am taking a chance in life’ etc. But I will explain it with a different perspective. I used to work in a center with young people, young teenagers. At the end of their time there, they were asked to prepare a recap of their life journey and goals.

00;32;06;11 – 00;32;35;05

Fabrice

That’s how I ended up with this young woman who came to see me and told me, so, tetraplegic, she moves around in her wheelchair, in an electric wheelchair, with a television, with a controller. She comes to me and says, ‘Fabrice, I would like to be a secretary.’ And I say, with the confidence of having put out a couple seasons of ‘Vestiaires’, I say, ‘You’re right, go for it! Tell them you want to be a secretary. We will look for training options and adaptations.”

00;32;35;07 - 00;32;48;18

Fabrice

But obviously it didn’t go that way. She went to the meeting and was told, ‘It’s going to be a bit complicated.’ So yes, I am not going to summarize it, but I think she was sent to CAT (Help center for work).

00;32;48;20 - 00;33;20;28

Fabrice

There’s a little part of Fabrice thinking, ‘Stop selling dreams because you were just so lucky. But…’ What words can you use to motivate people without…” And where I got lucky is when, a few years later, she contacted me on Facebook and sent me a message saying, “I know you told me to go for it, I… It didn’t work then. But I remembered it.” She wanted to tell me she was a mother now.

00;33;21;00 - 00;33;39;10

Fabrice

Yeah. I was really touched because it is a thing where, after all, I know the message has an impact. People hear it and she managed to transform this message into something else, a more personal journey. So the idea is actually to… To get people to… well, it’s the substance and the format.

00;33;39;12 - 00;34;02;22

Fabrice

What format would it take? And really hold on to the substance, because sometimes we take hits and it can be surprising. My friend, her son, he is super dynamic. He plays table tennis. He is in a wheelchair. It took about a year of fighting just to get a rotation going. A whole year of fighting for it. I couldn’t believe it.

00;34;02;25 - 00;34;28;08

Chloë

We spoke to some employers as well, and they were saying that the biggest worry they have is non-disabled people’s attitude. Non-disabled people are an obstacle in the workplace. What do you think? Is that evolving these days? Is it any different than 10 years ago or...? What about the future?

00;34;28;10 - 00;35;06;11

Fabrice

I think it’s just like a couple’s relationship. It is… It’s 50-50. It’s about how my partner is behaving and how do I react to it? And depending on how I am acting, how does my partner respond to it? It is true that for a lot of people around me, a lot of people with disabilities, they feel as if they need to do so much more, so much better, that they need to be… To show that… Show that we are here. To show that we can. We get to work earlier. We leave earlier. We can accomplish more, we are more impactful. Yeah.

00;35;06;13 - 00;35;30;02

Fabrice

I don’t know how long you can keep going like that, but that is the idea. That’s what I see around me. There is a side of it that… but that can be a good thing for certain people. It is this “warrior” mentality that says, “I want it more”, competitive, emulation.

00;35;30;04 - 00;35;38;03

Fabrice

Yeah. I am not sure if we could have a slightly more peaceful society, but yeah. That’s what I… my first impression.

00;35;38;05 - 00;35;51;24

Isabelle

Can I just add something? What is the role of media and representations—in movies and on television—could it help to change these attitudes, these biases and how?

00;35;51;26 - 00;36;20;24

Fabrice

About representation on television, it always seems to use dramaturgy. What I mean is that…—then I’ll talk about your third point—well, everything you see in movies, on TV, relies on dramaturgy. And dramaturgy is… Well, it’s a character who ends up in a situation, who encounters all these problems in order to change, to become something else.

00;36;20;27 - 00;37;09;20

Fabrice

So when we talk about a main character with a disability, it’s a good thing to watch them navigate their problems. And you see… well, the idea is to bring this image of an evolving character with disabilities to the non-disabled public. But also, movies who actually hit, etc.—and I feel like there is a bit of that—it’s mostly about how non-disabled peoples evolve in a universe where people with disabilities stay true to themselves. I mean, think about “Intouchables” with Omar Sy. I think that it’s the same thing in the Arthus movie, meaning two thieves who end up on a bus with people, people with autism, people with Down Syndrome, etc.

00;37;09;20 - 00;37;41;14

Fabrice

It’s about how they will have to change their point of view on this particular universe. So in my opinion, the logic behind it is essentially: in these people’s lives, what is a difficult situation that can force non-disabled people to change their point of view? To circle back on “Vestiaires”, Adda and I, we are from a generation who, as I was saying, in those centers and hospitals, we almost had to apologize for wanting to play sports among ourselves.

00;37;41;16 - 00;38;03;14

Fabrice

And these days, reflecting on it and when interacting with young people and young athletes selected for the Paralympics, we took a hit. Because we were facing a generation who doesn’t even bother with questions like “Did I spend time in a center or a hospital?” No, they ask themselves:

00;38;03;14 - 00;38;23;12

Fabrice

“Will I have time to do sport today? After going kayaking, my trumpet lesson and my rock band rehearsal, maybe I’ll have time to practice after my architecture classes?” And it isn’t about if they have two prosthetics, if they are in a wheelchair, if the chair will run out of battery.

00;38;23;14 - 00;38;54;15

Fabrice

And that really hit us hard. What that means is it’s a new generation. It’s like: “I have a disability, and what? Some people have blue eyes, some others have long hair. Well, listen, I have a prosthetic leg but it doesn’t stop me from doing all kinds of activities.” It’s a new generation we now have around, and they will be the ones making waves. That’s how it is. They are able to say, “RHWS [laughs], or even worse, they are able to write:

00;38;54;15 - 00;39;07;12

Fabrice

‘RHWS with accommodation, so what? You want me to work and I can do so, but I am going to need a desk. It is going to need to be accessible. And how much will I be paid each month?’ While we were still at, ‘Thank you for offering me a job!’

00;39;07;14 - 00;39;41;29

Isabelle

I love that, ‘RHWS with accommodation, so what?” [Laughs]. But it is good that you… I am happy to hear this. I am glad that—well I guess that is my generation—we are starting to… You went through some phases, then we did some more work and slowly, very slowly, it is all changing. But, yes, I am happy that some people can live like that, and that, even with the biases, change is happening. I am glad to see it.

00;39;42;01 - 00;39;45;08

Fabrice

This generation is probably in Canada as well.

00;39;45;11 - 00;39;45;14

Isabelle

XXX

00;39;45;14 - 00;39;46;17

Isabelle

Yes.

00;39;46;19 - 00;40;08;14

Fabrice

And on top of that, you are in an Anglo-Saxon logic, which might… I don’t know much about it. I am still in Latin logic. The relationship with the body is a bit different. But you must have seen this around for a while now. These young people who are killing it in their wheelchairs. They don’t have a medical wheelchair, but they already have these sports wheelchairs to go get groceries, to go outside. Yeah, it is…

00;40;08;16 - 00;40;10;01

Isabelle

Yes, that is how it is and…

00;40;10;08 - 00;40;25;15

Fabrice

You guys saw the first prosthetics, the ones with… the customized ones, the prosthetics with logos and… When we started seeing these, we were still at… We had just discovered the carbon prosthetics. You already had logos and brands. It is just awesome.

00;40;25;17 - 00;40;47;03

Chloë

But the prosthetics and all those things are really expensive. And that is… It is an obstacle for some people. Are there any government led programs for people with disabilities to increase their capacities?

00;40;47;06 - 00;41;22;03

Fabrice

Well… For us… It’s difficult. [Sigh] yes. So, you need… Your question, to me, requires taking a step back on something that is supposed to be transparent, a given, and that works for us. I don’t know if I will be… I’m not sure if I am being clear, but for people with disabilities, there is… Well, because our social security takes care of a lot of things, and it’s… even if it’s not perfect, it really helps on the economic and financial side in these cases.

00;41;22;03 - 00;41;40;13

Fabrice

I don’t know if it’s the same for you. One of my friends came to work in Canada a while ago, and he was using a brace because he had polio. He fell once and damaged it, but managed to fix it. Then he fell a second time and completely broke it.

00;41;40;13 - 00;42;00;21

Fabrice

Then he thought, “Listen, I might have to go back to France, because here it will cost me my whole salary for three months. And I won’t be able to manage that if every time I slip, it’s so complicated.” While in France, they take care of it. It’s always the same, it’s not fully covered and it can be complicated.

00;42;00;28 - 00;42;25;07

Fabrice

I say complicated, meaning that at home, what can be a problem is when it’s about kids in wheelchairs who need a shell to hold their spine—I am talking about a severe disability here—well, those kids grow up. And that means that every six months or every year, you need to change the… maybe not the whole seat, but at least the shell.

00;42;25;10 - 00;42;46;28

Fabrice

And I’m not sure if the social security system always intervene for this. Yeah. In France, we are aware that having a physical disability usually comes with a financial burden. But I think that our social insurance and social security system can help absorb that burden.

00;42;47;01 - 00;43;00;18

Chloë

We think so too, and I think that France is different from North America. We noticed that laws and social structures are more supportive in France than they are here.

00;43;00;21 - 00;43;22;13

Isabelle

Yes, but the work you do is really cool. And I like that in “Vestiaires”, you can see people with a disability, but with problems that aren’t just linked to their disability. They are just people discussing their problems with… Oh, I am struggling at work, or I have some issues with…” They are normal people.

00;43;22;15 - 00;43;37;16

Fabrice

Exactly. What we liked about “Vestiaires” is that for the same issue, if you had a small arm, if you had polio or memory problems, it would take a different form. So it would require a different reaction, I thought that was pretty funny.

00;43;37;18 - 00;43;40;03

Isabelle

Yes, and I think that…

00;43;40;06 - 00;43;40;26

Chloë

That’s all.

00;43;40;28 - 00;43;41;25

Isabelle

Yes.

00;43;41;27 - 00;43;46;01

Chloë

Maybe in the future, we could have another conversation. And if…

00;43;46;01 - 00;43;49;01

Fabrice

Yes! But when was the last time? It was, it was two years ago? Or was it last year?

00;43;49;01 - 00;43;49;17

Isabelle

Yeah!

00;43;49;19 - 00;43;52;06

Chloë

I think it was two years ago.

00;43;52;08 - 00;43;54;02

Fabrice

Well, let’s meet up again next year!

00;43;54;02 - 00;43;55;00

Isabelle

Yes! [laughs]

00;43;55;03 - 00;44;01;14

Chloë

[laughs] Next year, and maybe in France in the future. And if you are ever in Canada…

00 ; 44 ; 01 ; 16 — 00 ; 44 ; 02 ; 22

Isabelle

Let us know!

00;44;02;24 - 00;44;03;17

Chloë

Yeah, exactly.

00;44;03;22 - 00;44;10;03

Fabrice

Especially because, on the disability topic, we can’t let go. So I think we have years to come to discuss it.

00;44;10;05 - 00;44;11;23

Isabelle

Yes, of course. Thank you very much.

00;44;11;23 - 00;44;14;01

Chloë

Thank you.

00;44;14;04 - 00;44;49;05

Isabelle

During this conversation, we talked about a few different things. The first element was the importance of sports in the daily lives of people with disabilities, but at a high level as well, like in the Olympics, where people with disabilities can become celebrities or headliners. This point, as he said, can help to change the outlook on disabilities when the public sees that people with disabilities can become athletes. And of course, that they are on TV—most of the time—and we can all see it.

00;44;49;08 - 00;45;01;22

Chloë

That makes me think about the connections between media, cultural biases about disabilities and the actual experiences of people with disabilities, especially in the workplace.

00;45;01;25 - 00;45;36;01

Isabelle

Yes, yes, of course. And when he talks about media and cultural biases, the way he talks about it in his show “Vestiaires”, what really struck me during our conversation and while watching the show is his sense of humor. You can clearly see that Fabrice uses humor to facilitate conversation, especially on difficult topics like disability. And yes, you can really see it in our conversation, but also in “Vestiaires.”

00;45;36;03 - 00;46;07;20

Chloë

“Vestiaires” might make a difference because finally new generations have a very different outlook on disability. For them, a disability could be just something different about you, which might require some accommodation, but which doesn’t prevent people from playing sports, from taking part in activities or in the work life.

00;46;07;23 - 00;46;34;06

Chloë

Thank you for your attention. We hope that you enjoyed this Broadcastability episode. You can find us on the internet at theproudproject.ca. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube.

00;46;34;08 - 00;47;15;13

Isabelle

Broadcastability is a podcast put together by the PROUD Project, at the Scarborough College from the University of Toronto. Our partners are the “Indie 88” radio station in Toronto, the “Disability Rights UK” association and the research project “SORD: Recherche sociale avec les personnes sourdes” at the University of Manchester. Doctor Chloë Atkins and Isabelle Avakumovic-Pointon are the hosts for this second season of Broadcastability. Justin Laurie composed the music. Isabelle Avakumovic-Pointon edited this episode.

00;47;15;15 - 00;47;44;06

Isabelle

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