

Akram Khan Company – Vertical Road

**Message from Hervé Le Bouc,
Chairman and CEO of COLAS**

I met Akram Khan before I had ever actually seen his work. In April 2009, my team set up a dinner appointment in London with the members of Akram's company to talk over the possibility of forming a partnership. Looking around me that evening, I realized that the people at our table came from a plethora of countries and cultures – England, France, India, Pakistan, the United States and Germany. Genuine multiplicity, a cross road of diversity.

During the meal, I watched Akram, and he watched me. The powerful yet timid expression in his eye, his simple gestures, even his very presence astounded me, and yet, I felt at ease. We both spoke of the paths we had taken, of our lives, and of the meaning, the value of the social link created by Roads. He explained to me the role of the human body as he sees it – a vector of communication, cultural memory and personal history. And, then, both of us began to see that our two worlds obviously shared the idea of forming links between people and peoples.

From the confrontation of our ideas on Diversity emerged a common image: the Vertical Road.

Today, the management team at Colas, which does nearly half of its business in international markets, is still very French and very male-dominated. This is why 'Diversity' is the theme that I have decided to focus on in our upcoming corporate communication and human resources campaigns.

What I mean by 'Diversity' is that of the human experience, and even more, of the desire to experience life. I do believe that the young, the old, women, the strong and the weak, will enjoy building a heterogeneous work environment, making them more efficient, keeping their minds stimulated. People will be able to draw on other strengths, pull away from obvious, well-travelled landmarks, dare to question certainties, let themselves be mesmerized by different faces and facets - leading them to unveil unknown sources of energy and discover the vertical road that resonates in each of us.

That is also how this partnership came to be.

Hervé Le Bouc
Chairman and CEO of COLAS

