

RIPLEY'S
Exclusive

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Paralyzed from the waist down after an accident, circus artist Silke Pan redefines what's possible with her unique handstand routine!

In 2007, Silke fell from a trapeze. The injury left her unable to feel anything below her belly button. She had to leave the circus, but her love of performing never faded. Over time, she adapted to her new abilities. She even became a champion para-cyclist! Eventually, Silke relearned how to do handstands. After 14 years away, she returned to the circus. Her amazing strength and balance inspire audiences and prove that determination can overcome even the toughest challenges.

Since she is unable to move her legs, Silke keeps them in place by attaching a rod between her ankles.



Ripley's spoke with Silke and asked her some questions about her journey and approach to life. Check out what she had to say!

Q: What made you want to return to the circus after your accident?

A: One day, 13 long years after the accident, I was doing push-ups. My paralyzed side was strapped to a board to keep it in place, and my husband was holding my legs. Suddenly, my arms had the reflex to seek balance. My husband let go, and I balanced on my arms for a minute! That was my rebirth. I immediately understood that this was the beginning of the realization of a dream I hadn't dared believe in for so long.

Q: What dreams or goals do you hope to achieve next?

A: Since my accident, I consider each day a gift. Of course, I still have big goals in my art, but the fact that I've already overcome so many difficulties in my life and got to where I am now is more beautiful than I could have dreamed. When I balance on my hands, I forget about the handicap and feel like I'm flying.

Q: What do you wish more people knew about artists and athletes with disabilities?

A: We have to train hard like any other top-level athlete, but there are extra factors to consider. You have to constantly listen, adapt, and find new strategies to make progress. I'd say that being an artist or an athlete with a disability requires double the effort to achieve the same goal.

Q: What does your training routine look like?

A: My training includes aerobic exercises, stretching, muscle strengthening, and acrobatic technique. Mental preparation is a vital part of my training. I practice meditation to help me stay calm and focused in moments of great tension.

Q: What advice would you give to someone going through difficult changes?

A: Try to reflect on how you can turn the situation in your favor. Once you change your perspective in life, you'll see the world differently and start seeing opportunities, even if you're in a state of hopelessness. Persevere with faith and optimism until you achieve your goals!



THE RIPLEY'S COLLECTION



SUPERMAN CAPE

Worn by actor Christopher Reeve in the walking scenes of 1978's *Superman* and 1980's *Superman II*. A wider cape was used for flying scenes!

CATALOG NO. 168400