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**Translated by: SU-EN Butoh Company**  
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## **Restrained rapture in striking setting**

Dance  
Rapture  
Dansens Hus

The character Nora in Ibsen's play "A Doll's House" frightens her husband with her wild tarantella, a folk dance from Italy. This dance is named after the black spider, whose bite causes deep melancholy and through the power of music can be exorcised out of the body through a convulsive dance. That this medieval ritual, called tarantism, has bitten the body of Swedish butoh queen SU-EN is not surprising. Madness as a positive, subversive, creative feminine force has always been present in her work.

In the new piece "RAPTURE" she incarnates both the spider and the woman that it poisons. All this happens in a stylised ceremonial form – a slowly evolving live installation of art, music, and dance. The rapture suggested by the title is present but is placed in a moving piece of art, magnificently illuminated by Johan Söderberg.

SU-EN recently received the Uchimura Prize for developing Japanese performing arts and she is truly a worthy winner. She has expanded her own butoh, the Japanese dance form that was developed after World War II by Tatsumi Hijikata, for almost 20 years since she founded her company in Sweden.

SU-EN has choreographed in recent years grandiously beautiful works such as "Fragrant" and "Luscious", but also the vivid "Sprätt Chicken Cabaret". "RAPTURE" has a stricter aesthetic, and some slower sections bring Sankaijuku to mind.

"RAPTURE" begins with a beautiful ceremony when the flower artist Junichi Kakizaki places and waters orange flowers that glow with intensity by the edge of the stage, in contrast to the dry landscape of straw, branches, and leaves.

In the midst of this earth-coloured picture, SU-EN moves in a costume with a tail and sparkling hair decoration. Her movements with bent arms and legs are reminiscent of spiders. She is a creature of the earth that pulls her body up into an upright position, so that she voraciously bites into her own wrist and collapses – not unlike someone under the influence of drugs. In her next solo, she carries a black spider in her mouth, and dances mad and bare-breasted. Free, but also vulnerable.

Aki Onda's electronic music fascinates with echo effects, metallic sounds, hissing sounds, and voices that support the process with crescendo and diminuendo, all more dramatic than the whole. SU-EN is not alone on stage, even if her suggestive solo parts constitute the essence of the performance. The stacks of straw at the back of the stage hatch and give birth to creatures that later form a group of dancers of ecstasy on the field under the blazing sun – meanwhile the hay turns into flesh or rather into a hanging sculpture to worship.

"RAPTURE" does not have an even quality and sometimes stops in static images, but is nevertheless a remarkable and consequential piece of work about the uncompromising shifts that make life interesting.