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DANCE

Soot

Dansens Hus

### **Particles of soot, create a hollow beauty**

"The dance of darkness" was a term that the founder of butoh, Tatsumi Hijikata, used early on to name his provocative dance, born in the post-war Japan as a reaction to both western influence and the artificial domestic performing arts. Since then, butoh has developed in various directions, but in its core is a critic of civilization that challenges or deepens our experience of beauty, time and space in the universe.

When SU-EN (Susanna Åkerlund), one of Sweden's foremost butoh artists, after a number of ensemble choreographies now returns to the solo form, it is truly a dance in the darkness. But in this darkness there is a glow and it gives birth to new light through a concentrated, ritualized act that brings SU-EN back to the classic roots of butoh. Her personal mark is strong, but the brutally grotesque expression in her early solo work, *Headless* and *Slice* is no longer there.

Rather there is a hollow and dark beauty throughout the piece, even if the performance has a setting of a painfully strong sound, an apocalypse that gives birth to something new. Slowly the dancer emerges in front of our eyes, a figure dressed in black and whose fingers seem to search the air. The body shivers, sniffs around. It is as she calls forth what we cannot see, those dancing particles of soot which are left over in the burning process: traces of life in the midst of decay.

At the back of the stage, there is a dark grey projection that expands and changes shape, as the dancer undresses, layer after layer and gathers her costume in a pile and performs with bare back and soft arm movements, and later with more and more distorted limbs. The woman is transformed to a stumbling creature or an infant that tastes and licks her own body and seems to listen to the light that suddenly appears on the floor. The actions of the unfinished body expresses strong sensuality.

Lee Berwick's electronic live music expands the space, it roars, squeezes and echoes. Finally the dancer seems to become one with the soot, the matter. She disperses flakes over an object which even if it seems to be already burnt, it glows in a soft way. It is a true joy to expose oneself to SU-EN's unconditional presence and to study how also the stillness contains movement and change in black, aesthetic cycle.