

**Sydsvenskan**

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**By Malena Forsare**

**Translated by: SU-EN Butoh Company**

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## **Bodily action**

There is something about the wrist in the dark. How it rotates around its own axis, like a pumping jellyfish rises from the water. There is also something with the fingertips searching in the air. As if they formulate a comment to their own reason. A commentary on what the hand is to the body: a link between the human being and the world.

Never have I stared so intensively at a pair of hands during a dance performance that I do in "SOOT" by butoh pioneer SU-EN (Susanna Åkerlund), when she visited Dansstationen last week. "SOOT" is about soot particles. About residues after combustion that moves seemingly without direction in its own empire. Lee Berwick's intense music is reminiscent of the wind in the chimney, or of the wind that closes around a dirty hull. The dance piece leans its ear to this space.

"SOOT" is also about butoh as an art form. Building on the fifties in Japan it has spread over the world, but with the core intact. Butoh involves a resistance to principles of normality, a critique of civilization that in the case of SU-EN's also holds a feministic agenda. What is a body, and how can we understand it? What is a hand and how do we change our relationship to the hand when it opens or closes?

After a number of dance productions for larger ensemble, SU-EN now performs a solo which is like a ritualistic moving sculpture. "SOOT" unfolds in short steps, large twists, repetitions of twitches in the trunk and an outstretched tongue licking the skin like a kitten. The costume is strikingly beautiful, a piece of haute couture. Layer after layer falls to the floor and gradually uncovers new surfaces of the dancing body. That's when it becomes a sculpture, when the arms are in the dark forming one shape and the shoulders another. When the shoulders and back in a slow but intense tempo reestablish a relationship to each other.

SU-EN's extended journey goes through a sewage system, which perhaps illustrates the body's own. In its black, extended universe the reverse is turned inside out to become the center. The body hisses, cramps and is penetrated by a strange light. When feminist performing artists call for representations of the woman where she may be ugly, grotesque, disgusting - then SU-EN has not only found the way to do that, she has completed the circle and transformed a twisted shape to a sign of life.