

Written by: Örjan Abrahamsson
Published in: Dagens Nyheter, April 26 2010
Original title: SU-EN drar av oss huden
Translation from swedish: © SU-EN Butoh Company

SU-EN pulls our skin off

DANCE

"Blush"

SU-EN BUTOH COMPANY

VENUE: Moderna Dansteatern

The Swedish choreographer SU-EN's "Blush" is a grotesque and disgust-beautiful stage work where the human being is shown full of life - and flayed.

All is red and even more red in SU-EN's new choreography Blush, premiering at Dansstationen, Malmö, last month and now shown in the, unfortunately, half-full Moderna Dansteatern.

Red is of course the colour of blood, and of anger, pain, sexuality, birth. And, as in the title, the colour of the blushing. The unpleasant, physical, reminder of our most intimate, secret, embarrassing feelings are literally written on our skin.

It is not the shame though, but the naked sincerity of the blushing itself, uncovering the feelings under the cultural varnish, that is driving SU-EN in this strange, artful and thoroughly sophisticated stage art work, in the program described as a "LiveMusicalButohActionArt -Installation".

This means, among other things, sound and image is performed here and now at the stage. Electronica and live programming by Lise-Lotte Norelius. Images processed live by Fredrik Olofsson. In the centre of the occurrence SU-EN herself, together with the dancers Lina Palmgren, Frida Larsson and Marie Gavois. All dressed in red, little by little bodies are painted and splattered in red shades, flower petals and something that looks like blood clots.

The movements are painfully distorted, the facial expressions grotesque. Blush is the opposite of beautiful in a conventional sense. Rather grotesque, smeary, sticky. Disgust-beautiful in line with the hardcore Japanese butoh, growing out of the shadow of the Hiroshima bomb and with roots in German expressionism.

After nearly two decades as a unique Swedish island in the global butoh world of today, SU-EN - alias Susanna Åkerlund - has developed and refined her artistic expression and at the same time tied herself closer to the bloody heart of butoh.

SU-EN year 2010 is more butoh than ever. No ingratiating stage art for the lover of the arts. But a thought-provoking and sincere try-out, to show the human being without skin and thereby raw and bloody, perhaps disgusting, but pulsing with life.

The grotesque is in the eye of the spectator. And in yours, and in my body.

Örjan Abrahamsson