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Butoh reconciled: Beautiful as a falling drop of water.

Luscious by SU-EN Butoh Company
Dansens Hus, Stockholm, Sweden

Drops of water fall from the ceiling at Dansens Hus, down into a large vessel on the stage floor. Only the solitary quiet splashes alert us to this almost invisible spectacle. Poetically discreet, the performance *Luscious* by SU-EN Butoh Company begins. The drops of water constitute a silent yet explosive metaphor for the 80-minute journey of the performance, filtered through what is possibly the world's most distinctive performance art: Japanese *ankoku butoh*, dance of darkness. Just as we do not really see the falling drops but only their effect, we almost cannot see the slow movements of butoh – only their exponentially growing effect.

Dancer and choreographer SU-EN has worked since the 1990s with small-scale experimental pieces, deliberately provocative, dirty, and honest; far from the usually accepted ways of dance. With *Luscious*, she takes a new step, reaching out to a more general audience. *Luscious* is an immense, lavish, and stunningly beautiful performance piece with 10 dancers, the fantastic voice artist Nuria Dive Sagre, and Lee Berwick's subtle, suggestive soundscapes. This work has traveled long from the roots set down by the founder of butoh, Hijikata Tatsumi, and is now transparent, open, and accessible to all. It is comparable with work by the famous company Sankaijuku that has performed at Dansens Hus many times.

It may be that butoh, fifty years after its birth, has now reconciled itself with its own identity after a period combating the children's diseases of the early years and the indispensable wild teenage period of a growing art form. There is no longer a fight between content and form, between Hijikata's aggressive avant-gardism and beauty-worshipping stylists such as Sankaijuku.

Luscious merges these contrasts, even embodies the soul of butoh. Here we find the observable fascination for the ugly in the beautiful and the beauty in the grotesque. *Luscious* is penetrated by an urgent sense of being alive, and an absolute, meditative presence. It is danced for the audience with a poetry that is equally physical and ethereal. It amazes: as beautiful and elusive as its falling drops of water.

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