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Sensuous and ominous

Dance / Blush. Moderna Danteatern

Blush can mean both an outer visible phenomenon and an inner physical process caused by strong emotions, such as shame, anger, desire or fever. As Swedish butoh veteran SU-EN and three dancers from her female ensemble merges their bodies into the blood red theme in "Blush", it is situated in a landscape full of images, sound and fluid paint - life, rotting and death.

The installation is called "live-musical-butoh-actionart" and echoes historical references, from Jackson Pollocks action painting via the mythology's Three graces - here shown with ugly angeled limbs or rolling belly to belly - to the bizarre figures of the cabaret scene.

A reminiscence of the success Sprätt Hönskabaret (Chicken Cabaret for kids) passes by, otherwise Blush is partly a return to SU-EN's previous era when she made more provocative, disgust-brutal solos like Headless and Slice. Blush is anyhow a departure from the magnificently beautiful and thoroughly composed works, such as Fragrant, Cracks and Luscious in the later years.

Blush is partly built up from improvisation. Composer Lise-Lotte Norelius is creating electronic sound directly on stage. The sound can be associated with heart beats, nature and raw inner forces. The artist Fredrik Olofsson covers the back-drop with the photographer Gunnar Stening's close ups on painted skin, womens legs covered with red colour or backs sticky from something looking like smashed guts and dried flower petals. The same material is used by the dancers themselves on stage, in a play with superficiality and depth, beauty and discomfort. The bodies are painted, but the act is also like a cleansing ritual.

SU-EN is as usual both sensual and ominously mocking.

In the first part she throws dry leaves into the air and senses the pleasure in the air as they fall. But the organic is transformed into something else when she, dressed in a glittery red hat, releases a voice with echoing syllables building glowing words like blush, feverish, sunset. In the next moment she separates her legs and lets out an "aaaah".

There is a subversive touch in Blush, the trapped flesh that wants to come out, but is restrained by glitter, poses and superficiality. In that sense it is also an image of contradicting ideals of beauty, and of our time; and as such it is a demanding one.

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