

Written by: Anna Ångström
Published in: Svenska Dagbladet, 19 September 2009
Original title: *Bedövande vackert när naturen återföds*
Translation from Swedish: ©SU-EN Butoh Company
Edit: Gilles Kennedy

Stunningly beautiful when nature is reborn

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

The space is stunningly beautiful. A shimmering pond catches drops of water falling from the ceiling. Soil lines the ramp along the footlights; a strip of decay and vitality between the spectators and the ten fluctuating, astonishing, dancing life forms. They emerge on the big stage at Dansens Hus to reverberating electronic sounds performed live by British Lee Berwick and voice equilibration from Spanish-American vocalist Nuria Divi Sagre.

During the performance's 80 concentrated minutes that change our perspective of time, we see and hear Nature breath, expand, and shiver. It is destroyed to be reborn in new forms more dazzling than ever.

SU-EN and her collaborators have created something as unfashionable as a song in praise of life with this new piece *Luscious*. It develops the choreography from her work *Cracks*, premiered in 2008, and pays homage to the birth of butoh in May 1959, when Tatsumi Hijikata performed *Kinjiki (Forbidden Colours)*, based on the eponymous novel by Yukio Mishima. Its erotic and homosexual themes inspired that experimental choreography, and caused a scandal.

Butoh has since developed in different directions. Swedish SU-EN established her own aesthetics with provocative solos and group choreography coloured with feminist issues and brutal, bizarre expression. The slow-moving tableaux of *Luscious* give it a more traditional structure, still informed by SU-EN's strong choreographic personality.

The dark beginning awakens new life. SU-EN appears as an insect crawling its way out of its cocoon. Her hands clutch at invisible nectar and light, her crouched form unfolds like a flower. The de-personified and transformed butoh body turns the concept of beauty upside down. The extended ensemble, not uniformly constant, looks like white clothed mutants with clenched fists, strangely curved legs and arms, and open mouths. They are insects, hens, fearless women that suddenly, almost ironically gather symmetrically in a scene resembling *Swan Lake* in Nature's own cabaret.

The "dance of darkness" of destruction leads to the evening's most beautiful solo – SU-EN dancing in a red dress in a shower of petals.

She circles slowly. Her hands dance as she reverentially approaches the soil and strains it through her fingers in an act of love. The “sprouting end” is almost sleepy as the ensemble floats trance-like as blades of grass. *Luscious* offers the calm rapture of the mysteries of existence – life’s own choreography between darkness and light.

Anna Ångström

Svenska Dagbladet, September 19, 2009