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SU-EN makes us see the beauty in decay

With the butoh dancer SU-EN, nature speaks through the human body. 'Voracious' becomes a down-to-earth ceremony of life, hunger and death, writes Anna Ångström

Voracious

Genre: Dance. Participants: SU-EN, KAI-EN, Gabriel Bohm Calles, Marlen Sunna, Madeleine Holmlund. venue: Dansens Hus

Choreography, voice composition, costume, space, images: SU-EN. Music: Lise-Lotte Norelius. Light design: Ulrich Ruchlinski.

Gluttony and lust are two of the seven mortal sins - and when SU-EN makes her entrance in a earth colored dress and slowly circles around a dish of tempting apples, one is drawn to associations to Eve and the Fall. In 'Voracious' however, there is no snake and no god, only nature that speaks through the human body. Slowly and almost ritualistically the scenes alternate with projections of rotting fruit, and the theme that all things perish to give new life and rebirth is underlined.

This is home turf for SU-EN, stage name of Susanna Åkerlund, one of our foremost dancers of butoh.

This dance form, born out of a Japan traumatized by war, has long since branched out in to countless variations and parts of the world. SU-EN herself has, under her more than 20 years as 'butoh queen' tried different paths but keeps returning to the source of origin; the eternal physical transformation is performed, and the world is viewed as almost from the inside of the body. Butoh is, if anything, a force of resistance even in our time; through SU-EN, a quiet feministic protest that makes us see the beauty in decay; through the grotesque reveal a truth about the world.

Voracious stands for excessiveness and ravenousness. It could be food, but also an erotic appetite, the readiness to letting oneself be devoured.

The voice and the mouth are central to the choreography. SU-EN growls and whines.

Together with the screeching, creaking and scraping soundscape one gets the impression of hearing the intestines speak. The dancer brings a imaginary fruit towards her gaping mouth; the impression is almost whimsical when the dancer tries to resist the impulse to give in to her appetite for life.

In the projections, human flesh is united with rotten fruit as a reminder of our organic place in the cycle of life. Four dancers embody the theme with intense physical concentration - and among twisted limbs and hungry mouths, a swaggering bottom mischievously sticks out.

SU-EN, herself is a charismatic soloist and, like Virpi Pahkinen - another dancer with asian influences, puts a strong imprint on her choreographies. Through SU-EN we see the woman, the child, the desire and the melancholy wrestle in a form seemingly born among the glowing apples, which are spread out over the stage like stars in a night sky. The light design is exquisite, as is the final scene's stilleben; piles of decayed and rotten fruit like a compost. The smell spreads extends to a smacking sound. Everything comes together in this ceremony; life, hunger, death.