

***Mixtum compositum* in reflective mode**

The very first impression created by the spectacle “Mélange” may imply comparative intention. However, this is not the case. The idea is not based on comparing but search for unity in the picture and its meaning. Dance and photography? A sophisticated and daring experiment. The result? Astonishing, indeed.

The arrangement of the performance delivered by the butoh dancer TO-EN is a mixture of both form and content. The photographs by Pawel Maciak selected from the “Transformation of the matter” series differ in their representation: from unreal to the painfully literal ones thus displaying variety of disclosures. Bones, skin, animal trunks in numerous constellations, a close up of a withering leaf resembling a swelled human body, white maggots wiggling in the rotten dumpling. The way in which this multilayered organic reality is displayed strikes the audience with simplicity and the innovative concept of its authors.

Some of the photos employed as “living” pictures aim at completing TO-EN’s dance. This “living” factor is not contained in the photographs in se but attained by the choreography onstage. The pictures are projected onto the artist’s body therefore each of her movements animates the image. Such scheme has its counterpoint in the inverted strategy: in the second part of the performance the dancer freezes still for a moment enabling the photographs materialize as images pulsating and moving inch by inch.

In another project by TO-EN –“Embers” - the audience was exposed to direct transmission of intense blast of emotions. However, the interplay of two different artistic means in “Mélange” tackles mental reception more allowing the multitude of insights referring to reality. In the central part of the performance, thanks to her immensely expressive choreography, TO-EN’s body seems to speak: about eclecticism of the contemporary world, its fragmentation, disability to provide representation of human identity, where a person is seen as a part of matter.

The experiment allows TO-EN search new dimensions of the receptivity of the viewer. But foremost expands the philosophical horizons of butoh itself. If we focus on elements of this dance stemming from rite and ceremony, the additional element of interpretation incorporated here opens it to such reading in which the spectacle represents a spell cast on reality in the pursuit to integrate and reverse the fragmentation process. The butoh of TO-EN’s exceeds the limits of meditation. It opens itself to the audience by activating communication between the two: the dancer immanently unified with each of her movements and gestures (and thus charmed in the dance) and, on the other hand, the audience breathing in the performance onstage.

“Mélange” is a demanding piece requiring patience, concentration, submerging into the matter of the art offered. Verbal void is confronted here with a spring vibrant with expression and reflection. What the artist achieve as the final effect is the oasis of polysemy.

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