

Abattoir Fermé

SNUFF / INDEX 1 (2009)



This theatre performance by Abattoir Fermé is the first in a new cycle of work and will be followed (provisionally) by *INDEX 2: State of Waste/Farce* (2010) and *INDEX 3: I Am Become Death/Ah Pook* (2010).

The INDEX-trilogy is an attempt to catalogue the archive and the elements with which Abattoir Fermé has created theatrical worlds (*Tourniquet, Mythobarbital,...*) in the past. A comprehensive index that lists, organizes, dissects, extrapolates and purifies the materials of the Abattoir-universe. Spread out over three new productions, the artists of Abattoir Fermé will try to give shape to the dream of an old, a new and a utopian universe through the association of theatricality, a cinematic vocabulary, collective nightmares and arbitrary reality.

“Over time, the trilogy is indeed intended to offer a catalogue of the things we reckon are good. Those things have gradually become well known. I’m crazy about horror, plastic, fetishes, death, the history of art... so those things will all be there again, but we will try to present them as keenly as possible. SNUFF (INDEX 1) is in line with the silent shows we have put together in recent years. I want to arrive at an ultimate distillation in it.

SNUFF was put together with minimal resources: it depends on the actors. There are just about no sets and only a few props. With those, however, we set out to create a whole world.”

- Stef Lernous interviewed by Michael Bellon, BDW, 17. April 2009

Carried by home composer Kreng’s impressive soundtrack and using an a-typical economy in sets and props and, *Snuff* immerses the spectator into a highly stylized universe of murder and hidden passions. It is a wordless, kaleidoscopic ritual dealing with death and murder

throughout cultural history; using cinematographic images, balancing on the border between high art and kitsch and gradually unfolding into, possibly, Abattoir's darkest performance yet.

Credits:

Director Stef Lernous || **Actors** Chiel van Berkel, Tine Van den Wyngaert, Ruth Becquart || **Music** Kreng || **Costumes** Margerita Sanders || **Set design and construction** Leo de Nijs || **Light design, technician** Sven Van Kuijk || **Dramaturgy and production management** Nick Kaldunski, Nathalie Tabury || **Coproduction** Abattoir Fermé in coproduction with Kaaitheater (Brussels), kc nOna (Mechelen), Campo (Ghent), Théâtre de l'Ancre Charleroi) & supported by the Flemish cultural authorities.

First night: 23. April 2009 in Kaaitheater (Brussels)

www.abattoirferme.be

Press commentaries (extracts): * spoiler alert *****

When theatre is good, I find it better than anything else... When it's bad, it is often só bad that even now, at my respectable age, I am spontaneously afflicted with teenage acne as a result. But with the Malines-based world class company Abattoir Fermé, I am seldom disappointed.

For nearly a decade now, I have been a close follower of what this beautiful bunch centered around Stef Lernous has been doing and for their new performance "Snuff", I again felt nothing but deep affection and respect. At first glance, the men and women from this company present a striking pantomime with fairytales from the universe of that comical duo Eros and Thanatos, but for those willing to think it through, their seemingly playful performance cuts you deeper than a razor's edge.

I watched this performance the same way I used to watch the death of Bambi's mother's as a child: with pain in my heart and a fear that freezes my limbs, but also feeling muffled delight and a deep gratefulness to have been allowed a witness to the spectacle.

- film maker Marc Didden in Belgian newspaper De Morgen, 8. May 2009

The dark soundtrack by Kreng and the lighting give these scenes a filmic quality that is characteristic to the visual idiom of Abattoir Fermé. With white make-up, a grim grin on their face and blood poured over them, the performers set out to create grotesque stills. The performance is esthetically very appealing, using white, black and red as the predominant colours. On a symbolic level, there are references to murder in the name of power, lust, science and religion. Room is left for free association with Macbeth, Rembrandt's 'Anatomy lesson' and religious symbolism. The performance builds upon director Stef Lernous's fascination with horror and fetishism. When after the murder of his predecessor a new king is crowned; smoke, white sheets, blood and a sinister acting style succeed in alienating the event to a horror image that is a fair match to 'Carrie' or 'The Exorcist'. Apart from that, choreographed sequences verge between theatrical expressionism and fetishistic voyeurism, which leads all in all to a thoroughly stirring performance.

- Theatercentraal, Dutch webzine, 27. April 2009

Because of the directness of familiar images, a narrative context has become obsolete. The imagery, attached to physical anxieties, make this performance into a very intuitive experience – at least when one is open to that. Using no speech but instead a very filmic montage not unlike previous work such as 'Tourniquet', director Stef Lernous has succeeded very well in cataloguing and fleshing out the visual language that has become so synonymous to Abattoir Fermé. Action is reduced to sheer murder, colour to black and white, props to a series of murderous knives and characters to hollow psychopaths without the slightest motivation... A highly pure and dense performance. (☆☆☆☆)

- Cutting Edge magazine, 24. April 2009