



How not to miss an opportunity

Mette Ingvarsten's performance *To Come Extended* is an exploration of sexuality and lust. As often happens when I have seen one of her performances, I leave the premises with a smile on my face. It starts with strikingly beautiful imagery. Fifteen dancers in a white room, completely covered in blue tricot. Devoid of personal traits, unidentifiable, they perform a variety of sexual poses, positions of intercourse that challenge our references in many ways. Absolutely silent in dazzlingly beautiful lighting they move from position to position. Yes, that's the opening, and we in the audience sit there with our individual thoughts and reflections. Then – a total change. The dancers uncover their bodies and free their identities, put on socks and sneakers to dance the most seductive jive – stark naked. They dance with incredible energy, totally heedless of their nudity and unfettered body parts. The great thing is that we in the audience can accept and meet the dancing and the expression of lust with a jubilant ovation!

Leaving the performance I think of UNESCO's Freemuse report, *The State of Artistic Freedom*, a freedom now more and more under threat, also in Europe. One artist a week is put on trial for something he or she has expressed in art. Women are mostly charged with a

crime called indecency. In many countries of the world, Mette's works would be totally impossible to stage.

I think of some of the exercises I perform to keep my own senses alive and open. One of them is 'to look everyone I meet in the eye and give them a smile'. That is also impossible to do in many situations, because I must be aware of the fact that it may be perceived as a provocation. Many people engaged in artistic activism seek positive expressions for their activities. Beautiful Trouble is an artist-driven activist network working under the motto: *Tackle your anger with fun!* They have, among many things, created *The Reflectocube* (<http://vimeo.com/82943565>) as a weapon for beauty and joy.

Fatemeh Khavari is a young woman from the persecuted Hazara people of Afghanistan, now living in Sweden. She has a clear strategy. After many years of oppression and violence against the Hazaras, she works for change by confronting evil with love and positive thinking. She is incredibly brave! In the same vein there are many artists, who challenge authoritarian regimes and share their work via informal networks and platforms.

Yes, there are so many fantastic people prepared to act, take risks and express their ideas. Some of them are artists, who make us see the world as something greater than our neighbourhood, see our cultural differences as important and see arts as a way to express what we perceive as important from our individual point-of-view. We are reminded of the fact that we cannot take democracy for a given.

We live in Denmark, a rich, democratic country full of opportunities. We can speak freely to one another and share our experience of living, of politics and of art. Dansehallerne can show what Mette Ingvarsen creates and the works of many other artists. And we do it. Don't miss the chance to meet new situations and expressions. Life doesn't create itself. We must take part and take action!

Efva

PS I enclose the notes from a performing lecture I recently gave in Rotterdam, if you want to read some more about art, relevance and politics...

http://www.dansehallerne.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Efva-Lilja-Sing-Keynote-Danseatelier-Rotterdam-8_9-Okt-2018_a-Song-or-Scream-Out-Loud-.pdf

Dansehallerne's Director Efva Lilja writes a chronicle every month, which is distributed in our newsletter and published here on our website. / Photo: From the film *Walking the Mist* by Efva Lilja