



News Opinion Sport Arts & Culture Food & Drink Heritage & Retro Lifestyle Homes e-Paper Puzzles Advertise

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Sensuous Governing ****

Summerhall @ Danish Consulate (Venue 345) until 20 August

On the wide boulevards of Edinburgh's West End, far from the festival's frantic heart, a veiled woman rings a bell. Follow them and you'll arrive on the doorstep of a sensuous otherworld, filled with trickling water, opulent scents and wordless song. Take their hand, and you might just find your Poetic Self. Utterly immersive and surprisingly touching, this performance by Danish company Sisters Hope is a masterclass in reality-bending theatre.

In order to enter the aesthetic dimension, our submission is first required. A blindfold is placed over the eyes, and for almost the entirety of the visit, we are reliant upon the Sisters' gentle hands for guidance. This is the first gift that the show presents to us; the pleasure of being governed, of putting your trust in someone else. Robbed of our sight, the other senses take on newer, sharper forms; our touch in particular gains a heightened immediacy, as we cling to banisters and feel along walls.

Soon, however, the ponderous, deliberate pace of proceeding begins its meditative effect, like being immersed into a warm ocean of darkness. To reveal more would be to spoil the effect of the next two hours; needless to say, the experience is akin to that of a sound bath in an Aesop, but far more gratifying.

And when the moment comes to confront our Poetic Selves, something unexpected does make itself felt: a sense of being both more optimistic about what could be, and also more at peace with the world as it is. It's worth questioning whether Sensuous Governing might have the same impact when staged beyond the Edinburgh festivals – its sedate rituals and sense of intimacy are an ideal panacea to the atomised chaos happening in town. Either way, departing from its cloisters was done with genuine regret.

Deborah Chu

