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DANCE REVIEW

Through a Portal, to a World Where Listless Blue Creatures Await



Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Sugar doesn't live here, with Laura Grant, above, by Stacy Grossfield, is being performed at the Studio in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

By GIA KOURLAS
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The Studio, as it's called, is a rectangular room with a gray floor and a silver-tin ceiling. It is one of those anonymous places in Brooklyn — on an industrial block in Sunset Park — where dances are built and then delivered to a theater. For "Sugar doesn't live here," seen on Friday night, the choreographer Stacy Grossfield stays put.

Before her intimate dance begins, the room is already alive: two figures and two sculptures share the narrow stage. A woman in a black dress, bobbed wig and high heels (Ms. Grossfield) sits with her back to us. Her legs are open wide and the delicate musculature of her back is exposed, showing almost imperceptible movements as she writes private thoughts on a piece of paper hidden from view.

Resting against the wall is a listless figure in blue Lycra and a dusty green wig (Laura Grant). Completely encased in a bodysuit except for a hole for the mouth, she is like a lost mermaid thirsty for water. Eric Fertman's sculptures are just as enticing: hanging over a vanity table in the corner is a red bulb supported by a puppet cross. And in the center of the space is a door frame made of jagged pieces of wood. The structure is both modern and evocative of a forest fantasy: a portal for the imagination. If only Ms. Grossfield had shown more of her own in "Sugar," which is a series of episodic events. (By the end you're still not clear who she is.) Dance is among the ingredients and, perhaps because of that, the movement passages for Joey Kipp, which borrow from Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham and ballet, lack shrewdness and refinement. If "Sugar" is all about visual contrasts, there are too many elements that aren't firmly etched.

Still, Mr. Kipp works the hardest. Wearing a transparent blindfold — with each entrance he removes more clothes until he has on only a black dance belt and socks — he juxtaposes deep lunges with pirouettes, chaîné turns and the strong stance of a matador (arms back, chin up). He even snorts like a bull.

In the work, which includes music by Crystal Castles, Olivier Messiaen and Dirty Beach, arranged by Tei Blow, other characters come to life. Ms. Grant, shifting positions, looks as if she is trying to be a moving sculpture as she hugs the wall or crouches against it while shifting her pelvis suggestively. Later Ms. Grossfield takes off her wig and transforms herself into something of a ravaged woman wearing a nightgown while clutching her stomach in anguish.

Another blue creature (Heather Olson) shows up, and in the space's actual doorway — which the audience is facing — a bear (Bennett Harrell) occasionally comes into view. The hall soon becomes an extension of the stage, and we see the bear talking with a woman in a floral dress (Tracy Jennissen) who reappears alone crying. They argue. It's a letdown when he takes off his bear head and becomes a real person. In a room full of secrets it's the creatures that matter most.

Performances continue through Saturday at the Studio, 283 47th Street, Sunset Park, Brooklyn; (800)838-3006, brownpapertickets.com.