

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Amber Hongsermeier

Imagining Femininity in Purple and Pink

by Courtney Colón

GONG. A higher, softer tone. GONG. Amorphous pink and purple colors slink through space. GONG. A line of five bodies enter. GONG. Flowing white fabric, delicately placed. So starts Amber Hongsermeier's *ANIMA*, a quiet reflection of the feminine part of a man's psyche.

What archetypes rub endlessly at the female-orientated part of the male's personality? *ANIMA* has its own opinions. With the entirety of the icebox project space awash in soft pinks and purples and a projection of amoeba-like splashes of the same color scheme, it's a loaded metaphor. Here, we see five female-identifying dancers languidly move about the space, all soft sirens and curved lines.

The dancers mostly create the sound, striking the edges of sounding bowls and inducing reverberations heard in many religious and meditative practices. I found out later when researching that these sounds are a singing bowl's highest resonations, known as the feminine tone. There are periods of silence and sudden pulsating, percussive rhythms like lightning flashes, gone as suddenly as they came. The movement also comes and goes. The dancers stay mellow, moving in and out of phrases and groupings, expressionless and smooth as rocks worn by waves.

ANIMA is packed full of props. At the top of the performance, a white rectangular fabric covers the dancers as they writhe, seated. Soon, they stand, and as the fabric is thrown up and brought back down, each moves to the center, coming into and out of view. The sounding bowls are here, being picked up and left alone at intervals. When they are used, the performance seems at its most ritualistic, the dancers forming circles or marching uniform down unseen sharp, box-like edges. Towards the end, white fans with long trains of streaming fabric are used, flung into high arcs or soft columns. Here, I am reminded of Sundays in the South and of the feminine divine.

ANIMA is not subtle in its femininity. We see the message laid bare. It says, "This the feminine according to man," a message served

to the audience straight up. Yet, it leaves me wondering. Is this what the feminine archetype looks like through the male gaze in 2023? All fluff, no personhood, only soft colors, delicate fabrics, and quiet movement? I think of Harry Styles on the cover of Vogue and Billy Porter at the Oscars, and I wonder.

[ANIMA](#), Amber Hongsermeier, Icebox Project Space, Philly Fringe Festival, September 2-16.

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September 15, 2023