



Pop Necromancer

Bon Mott enacts ritualistic and often confronting performances channelling the late and iconic Bon Scott, famed vocalist of Australian hard rock band AC/DC, who is mostly remembered for his high pitch vocals and hypersexual ‘bogan’ persona. The American born artist summons the dead singer in dark pop cultural mash ups more reminiscent of Diamanda Galas and Lydia Lunch. Under this configuration, the popular text of Bon Scott is dislocated in eerie videos, photographs, sculptures and live performances that exhibit Bon Mott’s idiosyncratic vocabulary, which is largely informed by the occult and the figure of the femme fatale in rock culture. In fact, one of the most distinctive features of her work is the way in which she recycles popular texts through the lens of a gothic theatricality.

Mott’s occult sensibilities as (is?) applied to cock rock, similar to her previously exhibited video *Touch Too Much*, where the artist performs a ghostly version of the AC/DC song by the same name. In this work, her image is tripled in a scene where she is surrounded by fog and her movements are set at half speed. The atmospheric sound, which is arguably the central component of the work, consists mainly of her reverberated vocals cannibalizing the song’s main riff while articulating fragments from the lyrics. More importantly, the song is sung at a hauntingly slow pace – not digitally altered but simply sung in a slow manner – that decodes and de-encodes its sexual message into a love letter from hell. Like a pop cultural necromancer, Bon Mott continuously utilizes her body, the stage, lighting and sound to amplify her presence and deliver a message from the catacombs of hard rock Australiana: the words of Bon Scott.

However, it seems AC/DC macho lyrics are consistently being dislocated in Mott’s body of work, where Scott’s words are mobilized through her dramatic inflection and unsettling performances to clash with other unlikely references – primarily the vocal stylings of Patti Smith, PJ Harvey and Siouxsie Sioux. These texts are ruptured and reconfigured by a myriad of mechanisms, such as slow speeding, to convey more singular narratives crafted by the artist. The process is not unlike that of a fan seeking to reflect their personal vision or more immediate reality through the resampling of popular culture, engaging with mass media as a repository of source material.

By drawing from this pile of pop debris, Bon Mott touches on the way in which fans and audiences extract meaning from music and more importantly, how they reconfigure it to create new associations. Particularly when this process acquires a macabre undertone, a dynamic that has led to events as dramatic as mass murders, such as the iconic misappropriation of The Beatles’ White Album by The Manson Family – who believed the record was foreseeing a racially motivated apocalypse.¹

Bon Mott’s moving image works certainly echo a performative re-enactment of slowed down music videos. Changing the song’s tempo to inflict its melody and lyrics with a darker undertone creates an uncanny and somewhat melancholic atmosphere, evoking a sense of anguish that is largely triggered by her slow movements, haunting vocals and ethereal atmospheres. Nevertheless, it retains the sexual display that typifies rock performances, as incited by her nudity and body language. In effect, her performances bring together Eros and Thanatos in a ritual of gender-bending sexuality. Teasing the perceptual borders that separate the beginning of life from its inescapable end.

More broadly, her work indicates a propensity for ‘in-between’ spaces, as she positions herself at the theatrical overlap of femme fatales and cock rockers. Her work *She’s Got The Ability To Make A Man Out Of Me* elaborates on her tendency to operate amidst binaries by performing the lighting bolt that separates the AC from the DC.

-Diego Ramirez 2015

1 Vincent Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders* (New York City: W.W. Norton & Company, December 17, 2001), 238-245.

