

## **Jo-Anne Balcaen - *The Longer I Wait, the Better it Feels***

Jo-Anne Balcaen reinvests the meaning of artifacts from music and popular culture that have shaped female desire according to the dialectic of lack and excess. The male performers who trigger such desires are always out of sight, and the codes inherent in the representation of the musician's virtuosity and bravado are removed in favor of a constellation of clues suggesting the virile nature of his performance. However, some of Balcaen's recent work addresses the way in which she registers her own agency while repurposing these references. With the video *Long Shot* (2007), she indulges her own fandom by embarking on a journey to find the home of her favorite musician. Although brief contact is made, the 468 km road trip concludes in a psychological non-event, where the common referent that originally united them in fantasy is absent. In *Concert Guitar Pick Rob Metallica* (2008), Balcaen casts doubt on the provenance of a guitar pick purchased on e-Bay that allegedly belonged to musician Rob Trujillo of Metallica, by subjecting it to a condition report. While *Long Shot* separated the image of the star and his real, mundane existence, *Concert Guitar Pick* reveals the impossibility of equating use and exchange value when such commodities are transformed into fetish.

Obsessive fandom for a rock star is acceptable within the framework of individuals who share the status of connoisseur. However, defining it as a guilty pleasure has less to do with acquiring cultural capital than with giving in to a nostalgic or sentimental consumption of music that leaves a shameful aftertaste. Disclosing this shame can therefore be compared to the asymmetry of unrequited love. Despite all attempts to rationalize the absence of reciprocity, one individual is left alone, with the excess of his or her desire.

Jo-Anne Balcaen's work locates itself between two registers: the attempt to dissect and formalize these urges as a way to eradicate them, and the willingness to embrace them, uncritically, in a space that is momentarily free of any value judgments.

- Vincent Bonin, 2011

Vincent Bonin is an independent curator living in Montreal.