

HIGHNESS

Melanie Jame Wolf / Savage Amusement

Presented by
Arts House

Australian Premiere
8pm, 18 - 21 July
60 mins
\$35 / \$30 / \$25

Warning: smoke effects



Creative Team

Creative Director, Writer & Choreographer

Melanie Jame Wolf

Video

Sam Smith,

Melanie Jame Wolf

Sound Designers

Annika Henderson, Savage Amusement

Costumes

Veronika Schneider

Performers

Martin Hansen, Ivey Wawn,

Melanie Jame Wolf

Outside-Eye

Sharon Smith

Set Design

Sam Smith

Image: Anna Agliardi



Artist Statement

HIGHNESS is dedicated to every Queen I have ever met. Every single one. Queens from my every day. Queens from screens, from stages, from dancefloors, from the Nightlife, from childhood memory.

With this piece I wanted to conjure a performance of a kind of shape-shift through a series of Queen personas. It is a fluid passing through of the work of wearing a crown in the everyday; in stories and histories of colony and blood, theft, duty, devotion and spectacle - always in relation to one's subjects.

This work is the second piece in the *Arch Type* trilogy of performance and video works. The trilogy began in 2015 with *MIRA FUCHS*. It investigates in turn three archetypes of performing womanhood: the WHORE, the QUEEN, and the HAG. The interest of this series is in undertaking a critical exploration of the specific possibilities of representation available, and not, for women's bodies in the performance space, and out in the world.

HIGHNESS is first and foremost about the impossible and contradictory expectations put on women in the spotlight. It is about the labour of constructing images and the immobilising weight of holding the center of spectacle. It is most definitely not a proposal of new role models, but it is very much a loving embrace of Pop and the fantasies of self that Pop supports.

HIGHNESS is the next step in an ongoing shift in my practice towards a conversation between the live performing body and the screen. It draws heavily on the language of music videos and pop-concerts to explore how images of regal feminine power are constructed and deployed, like weapons. It is intended as a deep, queer, critical pop experience in which video projection is a choreographic material.

— *Melanie Jame Wolf*

Biographies

Melanie Jame Wolf

Creative Director, Writer, Choreographer & Video Artist

Melanie Jame Wolf is an Australian born artist who lives and works between Melbourne and Berlin.

She makes work about economies. Sometimes solo, sometimes with friends. Always exploring systems of value and exchange. Often investigating these flows as they are produced through ideas of ghosts, of gender, of pop, of myth, of morality.

Melanie Jame's expanded practice incorporates text, choreography, video, sound, and performance. She is primarily interested in ideas and questions of personae and their staging. The form of her work occurs with increasing fluidity at points where live performing bodies and video intersect.

Melanie Jame has shown work in a wide range of gallery, theatre, and film festival contexts including: Hebbel am Ufer – HAU; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; NgBk Berlin; Festival of Live Art, Melbourne; VAEFF Film Festival, NYC; Arts Santa Monica, Barcelona; Schwules Museum, Berlin; & Sophiensaele, Berlin.

Sam Smith

Video & Set Design Collaborator

Sam Smith is a contemporary Australian artist. He lives and works in London and Sydney. From 2013 to 2014 he was part of the Künstlerhaus Bethanien International Studio Programme in 2013/14. In 2014 Smith was awarded both the Goldsmiths International Postgraduate Scholarship and the Ian Potter Cultural Trust. From the Australia Council Visual Arts Board he received a Skills and Arts Development grant in 2012 and was twice the recipient of a New Work grant (2007 and 2010). In 2007 Smith received the Helen Lempriere Travelling Art Scholarship to undertake a series of artist mentorships in New York City and Berlin. He also won the inaugural 2008 Wilson HTM National Art Prize, the 2008 Churchie National Emerging Art Award and was a finalist in the inaugural Premier of Queensland's National New Media Art Award.

Veronika Schneider

Costume Designer

Veronika Schneider completed an apprenticeship as a women's tailor with Elise Topell after completing high school, before moving to London for an internship with Vivienne Westwood. Studies as a costume designer at the Universität der Künste Berlin followed. Since 2011 Veronika has worked as a freelance costume and stage designer with projects including work for the Thalia Theater Hamburg, Schauspiel Leipzig, Theater Dortmund, Schauspielhaus Wien, Staatsschauspiel Dresden, DT Göttingen and Theater Bremen. A regular collaboration connects him with the directors Ersan Mondtag, Lucia Bihler, Agathe Chion and Gordon Kämmerer.

Sharon Smith

Outside Eye

Sharon Smith has been working and touring since 2008 as a member of the Berlin performance collective Gob Squad and is equally responsible for the daily work of the extremely successful ensemble. For more than 20 years, they have performed and produced extensively. Currently, seven of their shows tour throughout Europe as well as in Canada, America, India and Asia.

Annika Henderson

Sound (No Ordinary Love)

Annika Henderson is a German-British singer, musician and songwriter. In her spare time, she is an (Anti-)DJ. She made her first record *Anika* with Geoff Barrow (from Portishead) and Beak in 2010. Since then, she has worked with Invada, Stones Throw and lately Sacred Bones, who released in August 2016 the first record of the new band Exploded View (Annika Henderson, Martin Thulin, Hugo Quezada and Hector Melgarejo). She has collaborated with diverse artists, like Tyler Pope (from LCD Soundsystem) and Yann Tiersen and performed across the globe.

Biographies

Ivey Wawn Performer

Ivey Wawn is an independent artist making dance-based work for a range of contexts. Drawing on poetics from economic and microbial processes, she develops choreographic blueprints that structure complex systems of care and transformation for the human scale. She works alone, in collaborations, and in groups, performing extensively in the work of others within dance and visual art. She is currently studying political economy at the University of Sydney.

Ivey's work and development has been facilitated by; Ausdance NSW, Australia Council for the Arts, Bundanon Trust, Critical Path, DanceWEB Scholarship, DirtyFeet, Ian Potter Cultural Trust, Readymade Works, Underbelly Arts Festival and more. She has had the pleasure of working with and for; Angela Goh, Atlanta Eke, Brooke Stamp, Germaine Kruij, Lizzie Thomson, Louise Trueheart, Mark Mailler, Rainbow Chan, Rhiannon Newton, Rochelle Haley, Scarlett Yu, Shota Matsumura, Tino Sehgal, and Xavier Le Roy among others.

Martin Hansen Performer

Martin Hansen is a choreographer and dancer, working between Australia and Europe. Martin is interested in economies and the politics of time, most recently explored in his works *If Its All In My Veins* and *Monumental* which have toured through Australia, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Denmark, Italy and Finland.

Martin is fascinated by the inhabitation of state and the production of affect in the act of performance and has collaborated with Sergui Matis, Ligia Lewis, Christoph Winkler, Tino Sehgal, Laurie Young, Costa Compagnie, Not Yet Its Difficult, Chunky Move among others and for which Martin was named Germany's Dance of the Year in 2012. Martin is invested in the intricacies of community and context and has published texts about dance and curated performance events in Berlin. Martin will make his musical debut at Tanznacht 2018 while also performing in a marathon work 'Neverendings' that fantasises about socialist Utopias.



Image: Martha Glenn

Thank You

Thank you to my wonderful friend Sam Smith. This work was a pleasure to do together. I am extremely grateful to both Anna Mülter and the team at Sophiensaale, Berlin and the entire team at Arts House, Melbourne for supporting this work, and my work in general. It is no small thing to be given space and time and belief as an artist. Thank you to Louise Trueheart, Jos McKain and Alistair Watts for touring this piece with me and in the process helping me find out what it can be. To the rest of the team: Veronika Schneider, Annika Henderson, and Sharon Smith – thank you for knowing how.

Arts House, as a key program of the City of Melbourne, is Melbourne's contemporary centre for performance and interactive artforms. We support new and diverse ways to make and experience art which is participatory and experiential, interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary, curated through a balance of provocation, responsiveness and collaboration with artists and audiences.

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For the Kulin Nation, Melbourne has always been an important meeting place for events of social, educational, sporting and cultural significance.

Today we are proud to say that Melbourne is a significant gathering place for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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