



Alessandro Bosetti

Royals

Monotype CD

Trophies

Become Objects of Daily Use

Monotype CD

A Color Photo of the Horse

DS al Coda CD

Alessandro Bosetti's work builds on music referencing the cadence of speech by Robert Ashley, Steve Reich and René Lussier, to name a few. But in his gradual transition from minimal saxophone to composition based on repeated text fragments, Bosetti has crafted his own aesthetic in the realm of talking (not singing) as music. The Berlin-based, Italian-born former Baltimore resident first delved into the use of languages he himself didn't speak on 2010's *Zwölfzungen* (Sedimental) and the 2006 book and CD package *African Feedback* (Errant Bodies Press). These three remarkable releases from 2011 continue the line of development laid out by the 2007 *Die Schachtel* release *Exposé*: it featured three long tracks each based on a single phrase repeated again and again by Audrey Chen, with music mirroring the voice while following patterns of variation and climax.

Royals is similar in some respects to *Exposé*. Two of the three tracks are around 20 minutes (the third clocking 7"). Multiple

speakers are used, allowing conversations and muddy choruses to emerge on one track, but the music is all created by Bosetti (with the addition of bassist Rozemarie Heggen on one). Having seemingly eschewed the saxophone, Bosetti these days is heard on keyboard and computer, and the musical choices he makes on that instrument seem almost perfunctory, even clinical, in a way that adds greatly to the presentation of talking as music. His simple electric piano sounds seem to be saying "and this is what the music would sound like if this were music," as if it were a demonstration track, but the layers and skips and stops are rich with information, sometimes even evoking Sun Ra's synthesizer solos. The longest piece, "Gloriously Repeating," is a sort of call to arms: a love song that devolves into a loop, as if in an effort to prove the purity of the speaker's love by sheer monotony—"a rose is a rose is a rose" ad infinitum.

With the band Trophies the texts become even tighter in their repetitions: Bosetti sings them in an inflectionless monotone that still follows the cadences of speech. The credo on *Become Objects of Daily Use* (with guitarist Kenta Nagai and drummer Tony Buck) is in the first track, entitled "This is not the same as chanting." It does, in fact, sound chanted, which serves to pose several questions. Is this in fact a meta-text piece? Does the (non-)chanting refer to itself? Or does it concern the fragmentary, half-audible story which seems to be told within the piece? This sort of willful obfuscation happens throughout Bosetti's text pieces. As such, it might not be recommendable to those with a strong need to "understand." Linear development is often expected when text is employed, but

Bosetti isn't often concerned with satisfying such urges.

Having a band, of course, gives Bosetti a fuller sound with which to work, and it's almost scary how much Nagai in particular gets the pieces. His laser-like electric guitar follows the voice at least as often as the keys, while Buck's wide range of percussive sounds (apart from the voice, the only "natural" sounds heard) are quick, busy and appropriately repetitive. The first Trophies album seemed like the culmination of Bosetti's work, a mixture of the right ingredients in the right amounts. Like any good artist, Bosetti undermined the recipe for the second album. On *A Color Photo of the Horse* (with Ches Smith replacing Buck) the texts get longer, at once more intriguing and more impenetrable. There are appointments at airports and requests for Skype conversations, meetings between strangers and visits to galleries. "Gloriously Repeating" recurs, twice in fact, its glorious repetitions never 100% repetitive. The album is full of suspense, of lost and incomprehensible clues (Bosetti has discussed his fondness for Francis Ford Coppola's 1974 thriller *The Conversation*). And if it is a film, the ending isn't clear to this listener, turning to Bosetti's native tongue in the final act. It is, in a word, genius, but also uncategorizable.

There are, to be sure, degrees to which an artist can be called uncategorizable. To insist that a saxophonist's quartet, for example, doesn't really play "jazz" is one thing; to find something which is at once absorbing and indescribable is quite another. What Alessandro Bosetti is doing is truly new—and in an era of revisionism, that's saying quite a lot.

Kurt Gottschalk