

Elysia Crampton's Self Titled Album is Badass Yet Sincere Electronic Music for the Post-Internet Age

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Elysia Crampton's new album is self-titled not once, but twice. It's her name in the "Album" slot when it shows up on iTunes, but the name on the sleeve is "Ocelote," apparently her DJ name. One of her many production tags is "fuck with... Ocelote." The message of this album: don't.

Elysia Crampton is a fearsome assertion of DJ badassery, electronic music so viscerally powerful as to suggest the person behind the boards is not to be crossed. Her music has always relied on rhythm, but *Crampton* hurtles forward breathlessly, its drums tumbling into each other like debris in an avalanche. It's avant-garde music, but it has more in common than you'd think with something like Justice's *Cross* or Skrillex's *Bangarang*.

Drums slice and dice. Airhorns wail like Judgment Day, allying her work with the modern electronic underground's poptimist streak in the most jarring way possible. An instrument as innocent as a harpsichord becomes a tool of terror on "Pachuyma." The harmonies she spells out behind the onslaught are achingly gorgeous, but getting to them can be a trial by fire—at least until everything falls away on "Orion Song" and the synths stand crystal-clear and alone.

What makes Crampton's music so exciting is that this is all entirely sincere. Post-Internet electronic music sometimes carries a smirking sense of superiority to cultural detritus. Not Crampton's. Though her brilliant 2013 album *The Light You Gave Me To See You* had someone named "C.L. Carter" singing disembodied Rihanna hooks over bowed gongs and dire Biblical proclamations, the effect wasn't to poke fun at pop but to emphasize its power as a balm.

If Crampton can be intimidating, it's not because she wears black leather, or commands armies of concertgoers—but because of the conviction of her ideas. This is an artist entirely comfortable with opening for herself at a gig with a lecture. She typically accompanies her releases with heady, erudite press releases that delve deep into Aymara and queer history. Figuring out where they fit into her music is an exercise in frustration, but you'll learn a thing or two just by being a fan.

A statement on the Break World Records Bandcamp dedicates *Elysia Crampton* to the Aymara trans femme revolutionary Ofelia and situates the album within the "Aymara relation to space-time." Perhaps this is why she flippantly plays with the conventions of the album format. Last year's *Spots y Escupitajo* was sold as a "sample pack;" none of her albums breach 30 minutes.

This one spans only six songs in 18 minutes, and if that's of a piece with Aymara space-time, it's also in line with the increasingly fuzzy distinctions between album, EP, and mixtape in the post-streaming era. In recent years, these delineations have more to do with the size of the

ideas than the size of the work itself. In that case, *Elysia Crampton* is unmistakably an album.



Photo by Boychild

-Daniel Bromfield

