

# LOTTIE CONSALVO FINAL REMEMBERING

# JAMES DRINKWATER IN THE HALLS OF MY YOUTH

8 DECEMBER 2017 – 21 JANUARY 2018

## FINAL REMEMBERING

Lottie Consalvo's work is often discussed in terms of what it is – a collection of paintings, a work of performance, a body of sculptures – but since the beginning, her entire artistic practice has been a series of explorations into how to make the psychological, material, ideas of time, memory and artefact are consistent tropes, woven together with an innate understanding of performance as both a physical gesture – painterly or otherwise – and as a material in and of itself to be employed in the documentation of experience.

Understanding Consalvo's work as a series of psychological performances and not merely manipulations of paint or clay or plaster – is central to understanding both the artist herself and this particular body of work.

For Consalvo, the works in this exhibition are in fact documentations of internal performances – both hers and others – recalling and re-enacting memories and encounters that have been quietly profound, both personally and artistically.

Consalvo has never sought to make painting through performance – these are not action paintings or the remnants of gestures – they are documents of moments in time and a series of conscious, psychological investigations into the ways the mind and body shift when you meditate on or step into memory.

The photo series *Gestures* captures Consalvo reliving and recreating elements of her past, distilling each particular moment into a form of gesture, or physical memory. The photographs were taken during Consalvo's residency as part of Kaldor Public Art Project 30 – *Marina Abramović: In Residence* in 2015. In the aftermath of that experience, Consalvo found herself thinking increasingly about how physical spaces can be altered simply by how we hold ourselves within them psychologically.

And so in this exhibition, memory becomes a physical space as Consalvo attempts to relieve herself of the responsibility to remember by transforming or performing her memories into tangible objects.

The large-scale paintings *Deep In Your Remembering* and *Until My Forgetting* are documentations of Consalvo's process of remembering a hug she dreamed of from the ghost of someone close to her – of trying to return that impossible embrace. In both works, the scale and installation are designed to overwhelm you – their scale and enclosure, a measure of the desperation of trying to hold on to an evanescent moment that may never have actually happened; their large shapes a gestural grab for something out of reach.

Made from plaster and stained, the freshly, writhing sculptures *The Hug 1,2,3* were shaped by Consalvo's own embrace – the solid forms quietly, desperately undermined by their hollowness; their loneliness reiterated by their isolation. Again the spectral figure of the ghost and Consalvo's attempts to re-remember her encounter with it are made achingly tangible.

In *Final Remembering (Books, The Birds, Robin, Home, Mother's House, Lottie, James)* the memories of a loved one, now largely lost to dementia, are captured in clay and then memorialised in bronze. Consalvo sat with her friend, now in an aged care home, and shared photos of things once special to her while she instinctively manipulated the clay Consalvo gave her.

These particular works, again documentations of an action, are Consalvo's attempts to understand the role of memory as a bridge between presence and absence. What becomes of our spirit when we forget ourselves? Where do our memories go – do they disperse like energy? What remains of us when they leave?

In meditating on memory in such a way – its slipperiness and mutability – and in performing her own memories into something tangible, Consalvo challenges us to account for our own remembering and the rituals we attach to this attendance.

## IN THE HALLS OF MY YOUTH

James Drinkwater is a painter and sculptor, but really, he is a collector. Throughout his travels, both literally and emotionally, Drinkwater gathers not only the structures and surfaces on which he paints, but moments, memories and visual impressions that capture something of the spirit of his life and young family.

Location and place have long been paramount to Drinkwater, whose painterly career began deep in the language of abstraction and landscape. But increasingly these notions of place are also understood in terms of time. He gathers memories, as well as found materials, and his works come deeply imbued with the remnant visual legacies of those places and moments in time, as well as the people that populated them.

In *Girl with Pink Sun*, Drinkwater repurposes a piece of driftwood he found on St Kilda Beach in 2006, the week he moved in with Lottie Consalvo, who would go on to become his wife. The eponymous girl, etched in graphite and oil, is his daughter Hester, steadying herself as she stands for the first time. The seemingly innocuous piece of wood, wires still attached, is now loaded with new significances.

Drinkwater isn't always so reverential with his materials. In *A New Orientation*, the artist's portrait of Hester spills out over the self-consciously ornate frame, without any regard for the formalities of framing as either visual device or practical consideration.

Drinkwater's structures – his frames and canvases – themselves come laden with a surfeit of stories; an incidental archaeology layered literally in their surfaces. In *A New Orientation*, it's a repurposed board that in another life was an old adolescent work. Elsewhere, in *Boy In Croatia*, an old set of curtains have been stretched and used as the canvas for Drinkwater's portrait of his bored but boisterous two-year-old son, Vincenzo.

Reaching for whatever might be at hand on the floor of his studio, Drinkwater is known to instinctively wipe his brushes and palette knives on discarded fabrics – drop sheets, old paintings, the aforementioned curtains. They are walked over in the business of going about his practice; collecting dust and ignored until such time as Drinkwater decides to resolve them as canvases for his stories.

Approaching his works with an instinct for colour and composition, Drinkwater paints as impulse, responding with material serendipity to the spirit of a moment that has caught his attention and whatever is at hand.

In *Children Watching French Cartoons in Tahiti (after Tuckson)*, the resultant image is a joyful recollection of his children watching television in French Polynesia, immune to the self-described 'prang' of cultures clashing about them, and prompted by the rediscovery in his studio of a book of vivid line drawings by Tony Tuckson.

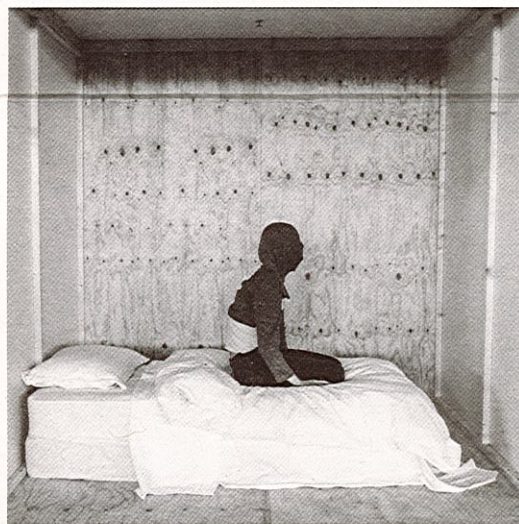
Elsewhere, in *I knew I knew you 2*, 2017, what began as an abstraction was transformed into a portrait of Lottie after she commented on its vivid forms. The title is a sentiment the two have explored since first meeting over a decade ago and the linen painting glued to the centre is in fact one of Consalvo's. It was made from a dropsheet bought in Paris while Drinkwater was undertaking the Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship in 2015 and painted in Croatia before being relegated once more to the floor of their studio. The date scribbled on the linen is the date he finished the painting.

This use of language in his work is relatively recent and a number of his paintings are now dated in such a way, transforming them into a journal of sorts for his marks and memories. This device of time-measurement is another wonderfully complicating layer to Drinkwater's practice. They are a subtle interruption to his richly abstract forms that ground them in something we all understand – the vague and nostalgic inaccuracies of memory, and our desire to nevertheless find places for them in our understandings of ourselves.

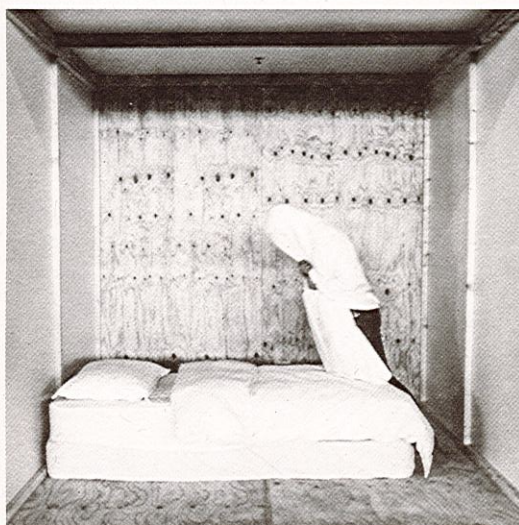
Jo Higgins  
Independent arts writer



James Drinkwater  
*A New Orientation* 2017  
Oil on hardboard and frame, 120x100cm  
Image courtesy of the artist



Lottie Consalvo  
*Gestures 3* 2015  
Made during Kaldor Public Art Project 30 – *Marina Abramović: In Residence* in 2015  
Giclée pigment print on centurion silk photo paper  
Image courtesy of the artist



Lottie Consalvo  
*Gestures 1* 2015  
Made during Kaldor Public Art Project 30 – *Marina Abramović: In Residence* in 2015  
Giclée pigment print on centurion silk photo paper  
Image courtesy of the artist

## LOTTIE CONSALVO

Lottie Consalvo is a Newcastle-based artist originally from Melbourne. Consalvo's practice traverses painting, performance, video, photography and sculpture. Her work explores psychological shifts and how time, places and imagery alter our consciousness.

In 2009 Consalvo moved to Germany, living between Berlin and Leipzig for three years pushing and expanding her practice. Consalvo's early works were paintings, but during a residency in Leipzig in 2011 she started making performance-based and live art. The artist has worked with curator duo SuperKaleidoscope and in 2010 exhibited in their exhibitions *A Perfect Day to Chase Tornadoes (White)* at Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin as well as the exhibition titled *Mono no aware* at Linden Gallery, Melbourne in 2013. In 2014 Consalvo was commissioned to make the performance *Until distance passes* for Tiny Stadiums Live Art Festival. In the same year, Consalvo co-curated an exhibition of long durational and endurance performances entitled *Enduring Parallels* at The Lock-Up, Newcastle.

In 2015 Consalvo was selected to be in residence with Marina Abramović in Sydney as part of Kaldor Public Art Projects 30 – *Marina Abramović: In Residence*. Consalvo also exhibited in Millerntor Gallery#5, Hamburg in 2015 with her performance for video *The Bird Catcher*. In 2018, the artist will have her first solo museum exhibition at Heide Museum of Modern Art in Victoria. Consalvo's work is held in collections including Artbank, Allens Law Firm, and Warner Music Australia. She is represented by Dominik Mersch Gallery, Sydney and NKN Gallery Melbourne.

## JAMES DRINKWATER

James Drinkwater is a Newcastle-based artist whose practice spans painting, sculpture, assemblage and collage. Drinkwater makes work about place, intimacy and memory, using abstraction, colour and mark-making to transmit these preoccupations.

Drinkwater grew up in Newcastle and studied at the National Art School in Sydney before moving to Melbourne for several years. He then moved to Germany and lived between Berlin and Leipzig for three years where he continued his practice. In 2011 Drinkwater received the Marten Bequest travelling Scholarship and was hung in the Dobell Drawing Prize. He was a finalist for the Wynne prize in 2014, 2015 and 2017 and the Sulman prize in 2016. He was a finalist for the Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship for three consecutive years before winning it in 2014.

Drinkwater's work is held in major public and private collections both nationally and internationally, including the Macquarie Bank Art Collection, Artbank, Gold Coast City Art Gallery, Macquarie University, Bond University, the Newcastle Art Gallery, Allens Law Firm and private collections in New York, Singapore, Germany and the UK. He is represented by Nanda/Hobbs Gallery, Sydney and NKN Gallery, Melbourne.