

# DREAMS UNSEEN

Lottie Consalvo is a master of reinvention. Switching seamlessly between painting, sculpture, video and performance, her latest work explores the slippery spaces between real and imagined.

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*LOREM IPSUM* denotes an unreadable but visually cohesive piece of text; a publisher's placeholder for future, fully formed copy and ideas. We employ *lorem ipsum* when we don't yet have the words. Latin's inability to be strictly and rationally decoded in this instance finds parallel in the practice of Newcastle-based artist **Lottie Consalvo**, who resolutely destroys her work if it reminds her of something already said. As such, her latest suite of paintings exhibited at the Auckland Art Fair begin yet another chapter in a rapidly growing oeuvre that stretches out over the past decade.

Consalvo is the master of reinvention: restless, enigmatic, charming and magnetic, she is a constant agitator for new languages and means to express the ineffable, satisfied if only for a second before craving new ground. Never formally trained in the arts, she has honed the forms of painting, sculpture, video and performance through self-discipline, switching seamlessly between them and often stitching more than one together to create unheard dialogues.

Consalvo's restlessness and thirst for reinvention carries through from art to life – the approach to her world is constantly shifting and being fine-tuned, first as an individual and now as a wife and mother of two. Nothing is too hard; echoing throughout both life and art is an attempt to achieve the impossible.

In 2014, this determination appeared in two performance pieces: *Near your sorrow* at The Lock Up in Newcastle, and *I mouthed I love you* at Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, where Consalvo futilely carried out rituals built to reverse an irreversible event that profoundly impacted her life. Just last year Consalvo was heavily influenced by the horizon and its parallels, its ungraspable and intangible existence, which we still attempt to attain and place dimensions on. Her obsession was made clear in the solo show *Ages and Ages* (2018) at Heide MOMA, where performance and painting collided in a single act – the painting of one line across 11 metres performed in situ but witnessed by no one. The lack of audience was a conscious decision for Consalvo, who often deliberates over whether a performance needs to be witnessed to be legitimised.

Today, the horizon has vanished from Consalvo's work. Instead she is "thinking about the imaginary and reality and where the two meet", she says. "We live within both – or rather, the imaginary is not another place, it is within the one place. But one we see as truth and the other as fiction."

*Louder Than The Constant Ringing of Bells* (2019) with its furious, feathered brushstrokes, invites you into the theatre set of your life, as if you could take a step and land right there in the storm of the painting. It is dreamlike and nightmarish at once, its pinks and reds consciously intoxicating. Other works, with their generously thick black linen frame, pull you in vortex-like, catching and holding your gaze hypnotically.

Talking further about the Auckland works, with titles such as *The Fictitious Imagery* and *There Are Places We Can Go Where There Are No Witnesses*, Consalvo muses: "I close my eyes and I see a blue room and its contents, then it turns to pink. And I can even see the room when my eyes are open, but I am actually looking at waves moving in slow motion, defying time. The real and the imaginary without distinction. An entry into an indescribable space where we might actually live more present in our dreams. To dilute time, its contents, or to add potency, so the body aches from trying to feel something."

"I knew Lottie as a performance artist. When I discovered her paintings I was mesmerised by the strength and the aesthetics of the works," says **Dominik Mersch**, Consalvo's Sydney gallerist. "For me, this new body is a fascinating contradiction: on the one hand many new works are framed by vast patches of black linen, almost as if they need to be tamed, but also to command space and time from the viewer. On the other hand, Consalvo introduces a new, bolder colour palette after her travels in India."

The endurance in Consalvo's work lies in its resisting of time's trends. She is constantly taking risks and struggling for the new, ahead of crystalised practices and language. Travelling with her, she asks us to be brave in a way that we are born with but have forgotten, and now perhaps need to remember and relearn.

LOTTIE CONSALVO SHOWS WITH DOMINIK MERSCH GALLERY, SYDNEY, AT AAF 2019.



Lottie Consalvo, *Anchoring The Collapse*, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 140cm.

NEXT PAGE: Lottie Consalvo, *Louder Than The Constant Ringing Of Bells*, 2019. Acrylic on board, 120 x 200cm.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND DOMINIK MERSCH GALLERY, SYDNEY. PHOTO: DEAN BELETICH.



