



JUSTENE WILLIAMS: THE CURTAIN BREATHED DEEPLY

The Curtain Breathed Deeply is an expansive touring exhibition by artist Justene Williams. An immersive installation of video performance, elaborate handmade sets and sculptural elements, *The Curtain Breathed Deeply* is a space of spectacle and contemplation brimming with pattern, colour and texture.

Williams' eclectic assemblage of visual and aural curiosities is drawn from her personal life and relationships. The work is informed by memories of her father's wrecking yard, her childhood training in dance, as well as references to fine art, film and photography. *The Curtain Breathed Deeply* integrates objects and images taken from the vernacular of suburban Australia: garbage bags, tarpaulins, a backyard kids' pool and a bar fridge. Williams combines and transforms these mundane found objects with fantastical bodies and idiosyncratic visuals to create a theatrical and seductive environment.

The artist draws on many and varied sources as inspiration for her work, from cultural rituals and rites of ceremony to the canon of art history. *The Curtain Breathed Deeply* invokes major art historical figures including Pablo Picasso, Fernand Leger, Yves Klein and Dan Flavin, as well

as references to Modernist Primitivism, avant-garde theatre, Dada happenings, Surrealist film, Constructivist architecture and dance, along with a range of everyday pop cultural influences including hip hop, Milli Vanilli and Broadway musicals.

Curtains and screens act as thresholds between realms throughout the installation. For Williams, the curtain, and more broadly this exhibition, pays tribute to the life and work of her father and nods to the hospital curtain that marked the final stage of his life before he passed away from lung cancer. *The Curtain Breathed Deeply* celebrates the life of a loved one, with dreams, death, desire and renewal as central themes of the exhibition.

A major new monograph accompanies the exhibition, featuring essays by dance theorist and University of New South Wales Senior Lecturer Dr Erin Brannigan, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia Curator Anne Loxley, Sydney-based arts writer Pamela Hansford and renowned playwright Lally Katz, with additional contributions from Charlotte Day, Francis E. Parker, Geraldine Kirrihi Barlow, Caraline Douglas and Mark Feary.

The Curtain Breathed Deeply was curated and developed by Artspace, Sydney and is touring nationally in partnership with Museums & Galleries of NSW.

The generous bequest of the Catalyst: Katherine Hannay Visual Arts Commission enabled Artspace to support Justene Williams in the development of this major new work at a pivotal moment in her career.

The Curtain Breathed Deeply will tour nationally visiting metropolitan and regional centres in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, New South Wales and Queensland from 2016-2018, including Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Bunbury Regional Art Galleries, Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Goulburn Regional Art Gallery, Griffith Regional Gallery, Ipswich Art Gallery, Tamworth Regional Gallery, Lismore Regional Gallery and Penrith Regional Gallery & The Lewers Bequest.

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.



Cover image: Justene Williams, *Costume relic painting*, 2014, plastic tablecloths, various tapes. All images courtesy the artist and Sarah Cottier Gallery.



← **Assisted performance relics** →
Above ground pool, assorted coins, wood, string, tape, cardboard, various materials.

↓ **Yves Klein Eyes**
2 channel HD video; *Blame it on the rain*, 9 minutes 37 seconds and *Owls*, 4 minutes 54 seconds. Plywood.

↘ **Santa was a Psychopomp** ↘
Single channel HD video, 16 minutes 27 seconds.



↑ **Performance relic painting**
Tarpaulin, tape, rope.

→ **In advance of a broken wing** →
2 channel HD video; *Alien animal*, 11 minutes 46 seconds and *Hunter*, 11 minutes 9 seconds.

← **A ceremonial hat worn for eating finger cheese**
7 channel video on loop, various durations. CRT television, garbage bags, foam, various materials.

→ **Costume relic painting** →
Plastic tablecloths, various tapes.



↓ **Given That/You put a spell on mine/Uterus**
6 channel HD video installation; *Hairy Cunt Ball*, 12 minutes 52 seconds, *You put a spell on mine*, 12 minutes 36 seconds, *Bangle*, 15 minutes 31 seconds, *Given That*, 9 minutes 52 seconds, *Hairy Cunt Ball 2*, 13 minutes 59 seconds and *Helicopter*, 8 minutes. Fluorescent lights, cardboard, various materials.



← **Assisted performance sculpture**
Paint, wood, tape, plastic, cardboard, various materials.

↓ **The Joy of Life after Matisse/Madonna/Marcel**
3 channel HD video; *Matisse*, 9 minutes 55 seconds, *Madonna*, 10 minutes 5 seconds and *Marcel*, 10 minutes 10 seconds. Tape, foam core, paper, paint, various materials.

