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LIONEL BAWDEN

There is some synergy – or is it irony? – when an artist whose sculptures are made of pencils should find text work his next artistic iteration. Since 2017, **Lionel Bawden's** practice has expanded from his organically shaped, fused pencil sculptures to include a new series of experimental works that embrace both painting and sculpture. His 2017 installation *The Kandinsky has two sides*, exhibited at Sydney's Arterial Gallery, transitioned the humble cereal packet into a vehicle for the artist's meditations on the randomness of thought and the nature of duality.

His most recent departure from the renowned pencil works is part of an exhibition at Hazelhurst Arts Centre titled *Weapons For The Soldier*. Devised by young men from the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, the question they asked both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists to unpack was: What does it mean to defend one's country? Bawden's response was to set aside his languorous, smoothly tactile sculptures for text, using doormats as canvases for his message.

Bawden explains: "I am not much for weapons, but I figure weapons are for people defending something they believe in protecting. Words are something I use all the time in strength, vulnerability and curiosity. They are perhaps the closest things I have to weapons."

Each doormat contains one word printed in black ink and simple type – *AS YOU WALK OVER ME THINK ABOUT WHO I AM*. Bawden explains: "I need to remember that I am in Country all the time. If we are at home, inside our houses, we are still on Aboriginal land, still in Country, even though it is skinned with cement, wood or carpet. We are still in Country even though we place a mat outside our door, demarking space as our own."

Weapons For The Soldier shows at Hazelhurst until 3 February 2019.

Helen McKenzie



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OPPOSITE PAGE: Lionel Bawden, *Groundwork (AS YOU WALK OVER ME THINK ABOUT WHO I AM)*, 2018. Exterior paint on coir fibre doormat attached to vinyl base, edition of 3 + 2AP, each 40 x 60cm. PHOTO: SILVERSALT PHOTOGRAPHY.

THIS PAGE: Installation views of Lionel Bawden's *The Kandinsky has two sides*, Arterial Gallery, Sydney, 2017.

PHOTO: ZAN WIMBERLEY.

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND ARTERIAL GALLERY, SYDNEY.

