

Fleisher Ollman

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Felipe Jesus
Consalvos
Stereopticons, c.
1920–1960s
Mixed media
collage on paper
15 x 11 in (38.1 x
27.9 cm)

Castle/Consalvos

June 13 – August 9, 2019

Opening reception: Thursday, June 13, 6-8pm

For our Summer 2019 exhibition, Fleisher/Ollman is pleased to announce *Castle/Consalvos*, which not only showcases the breadth of these two self-taught artists' respective bodies of work, but also reveals an interesting resonance regarding their embrace of popular culture.

Born profoundly deaf and believed never to have learned how to read, write, or sign, James Castle (1899–1977) spent his life making drawings, books, and constructions on his parents' Idaho farm. Initially, Castle was known for his landscapes and interiors that demonstrate a profound sense of place and rural life, drawn primarily in soot mixed with the artist's saliva on found paper. But Castle was also an artist of his time who found inspiration in a wide range of images and ideas sourced from popular culture, including cartoons and printed advertisements, which he would copy with varying degrees of artistic license. The detritus of consumption, such as matchboxes, string, packaging materials, and found paper, became his raw materials. Interwoven throughout his work are idiosyncratic figures, depictions of totem-like objects, and pictographs that suggest language, but are ultimately ineffable. In *Castle/Consalvos* we include his more colorful work that resonates strongly with 1960s Pop—drawings made with colors reclaimed from crepe tissue, construction, and other pigment-rich papers soaked in water. We explore Castle's engagement with language and narrative by showing his handmade books and his pictographic drawings (he both copied letters and invented his own writing systems). Finally, Fleisher/Ollman presents Castle's paper constructions which depict the quotidian (folded clothing, architectural features) and the figurative (blocky, featureless characters attired in carefully creased and string-bundled paper outfits).

Felipe Jesus Consalvos was born outside Havana in 1891, and emigrated to Miami around 1920, eventually settling in New York and finally Philadelphia, where he died sometime in the 1950s or 1960s. A self-appointed “cigar maker, creator, healer, and man”—this phrase appears on a collaged typewriter as a kind of signature—Consalvos worked for much of his life as a cigar roller. He extrapolated the vernacular tradition of cigar band collage to a highly sophisticated, inimitable

practice. His obsessive body of work of approximately 850 surviving collages on paper, found photographs, musical instruments, furniture, and other unexpected surfaces and objects were discovered in the early 1980s at a West Philadelphia garage sale. Consalvos seemingly merges the biting socio-political satire and absurdist impulse of Dadaists like Kurt Schwitters and Max Ernst with the arcane mysticism of Joseph Cornell, Jess, and Bruce Conner. He likewise parallels and prefigures certain contemporaneous developments in Surrealist, Futurist, and Pop collage, design, and even poetry. Consalvos did not date or title his work, so we can only estimate that his collages were created sometime between 1920 and the late 1950s—the very time in which his highly esteemed colleagues were taking the radical juxtaposition of images to new levels of sophistication.

In addition to major retrospectives at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (traveled to Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive and the Art Institute of Chicago) and the Reina Sofia, Madrid Spain, James Castle's work is included in museum collections throughout the United States including American Folk Art Museum, Museum of Modern Art, and Whitney Museum of American Art, all in New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia Museum of Art; High Museum, Atlanta, GA; Boise Art Museum, ID; Milwaukee Art Museum, WI; Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive, CA; and the Art Institute of Chicago, among others.

Felipe Jesus Consalvos has been included in group exhibitions at the Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia (in collaboration with the Museum of Everything); El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY; and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, among many others. He is included in museum collections such as American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY; Harvard Art Museums, Cambridge, MA; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI; Museum of Everything, London, UK; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA; Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA; and the Minneapolis Institute of Art, MN.