

EDUCATION KIT

Laith McGregor: Borrowed Time

5 October – 2 December 2018 | Tweed Regional Gallery

Primary Education Kit

Image credit: Laith McGregor | *Chess (detail)* | 2016 | Pencil on Paper | 82 x 71cm

About *Laith McGregor: Borrowed Time*

Borrowed Time brings together new and recent works by contemporary Australian artist Laith McGregor across a variety of media, including painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture and video, focusing on ideas of time and labour.

Things to consider

- McGregor is an interdisciplinary artist who does not confine his practice to one specific medium. Consider why the artist has chosen to explore his ideas through the use of different materials and medias.
- Time, as both a subject matter and as a measure of labour, is an important theme throughout McGregor's work. Think about how important time is to all of us, and the different ways we measure and mark time in our lives.
- Many of McGregor's works are very labour intensive taking months to complete. It may be useful to contemplate how daily commitment, self-discipline, and having an "end goal" are important in art and life, and how the *process* of creating a piece of art can be just as enriching as the finished work.
- A sense of humour and playfulness are also evident in some of McGregor's works. It is clear that the artist is having fun and letting his imagination flow freely. The result is that some of his pieces have a natural humility and don't take themselves too seriously. Consider how we express ourselves through our sense of humour and what roles humour can have in communicating ideas and making art.

How do I understand it?

There are many ways you can develop your understanding and therefore appreciate artworks more.

- Reading the didactic (signage near the front of the exhibition and under some of the artwork) will give you a brief background about the artist, what ideas he is interested in and where he draws his inspiration.
- The title of a work can sometimes reveal what the artist intends to communicate or provide a clue about the subject matter and his thought process.
- Looking at what has been used (and how) to create artworks can tell you more about the artist's intention.
- Look closely at the artwork. Take your time to get close to the pieces and study all the details. Often, the more you look at a work, the more will be revealed to you.
- It is important to remember that looking at art is a subjective experience and the way that you see an artwork is unique to you. Certain works may "speak" to you more than others.

Themes in *Borrowed Time*

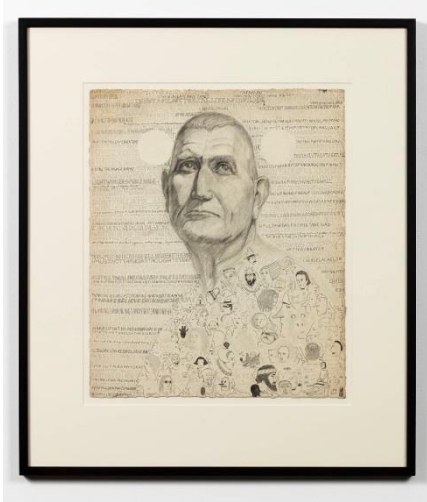
As the title of this exhibition suggests, Time is a major theme that runs through this exhibition of McGregor's work. The works in 'Borrowed Time' also explore concepts of identity, authorship, and physical labour. Looking closely at McGregor's large scale drawing *This Old Night* for example, reveals how labour intensive such works are, taking the artist hundreds of hours to complete the hatched line drawing work that takes the form of a paint-by-numbers template of a South Pacific Landscape. In another work, *One Year*, McGregor displays all of the pencil shavings that he produced over a one year period in his studio, *One Year* literally serves as physical measure of the artist's time and labour.

Known for the technical skill of his drawings, McGregor also challenges the traditional definition of authorship, adopting a more collaborative approach for a number of works in 'Borrowed Time'; including a series of drawings from 2016 that use existing images by unknown artists from the early 20th century as a starting point for McGregor's own interventions. For his series of ceramic and mixed media sculptures, McGregor inserts utilitarian objects and carving basic facial features into the surface, creating just enough detail to give the object a familiar quality.

Also notable is a recurring motif of empty eye-like circles – these reference McGregor's ongoing interest in portraiture and remind the viewer that McGregor's paintings and drawings are constructed images.

Identity and Personality	Portraiture is one of the oldest traditions in visual art. It can take many forms. As people, we are very interested in the lives of others, and in how faces can tell stories about who we are and what we've done. Sometimes we look for human faces in non-living things too.
Time	We all experience time, but often we experience it differently. Some moments seem to go on forever, and sometimes an hour feels like it went by too quickly. Our awareness of time and how we use it every day is very important in how we perceive reality and ourselves.
Labour	We all know that learning how to do new things and master certain skills takes hard work and commitment. The same is true in making art. Usually it is the process of doing the hard work that teaches us and is just as valuable, if not inseparable from the end result.
Lost and Found	Laith McGregor is an artist who collects works by other artists and sometimes uses them in his own work. In some cases, the original artist is unknown. McGregor intervenes in artworks in response to the existing images as means to express his own ideas and observations.

Borrowed Time Artworks



Chess | 2016 | Pencil on Paper | 82 x 71cm

Identity and Personality

Task 1: Look very closely at the drawing. Read some of the writings and look at all the faces on the man's chest.

Q1: Do you ever draw faces like the ones you see? Draw a character you have created.

Q2: Are there any phrases or words that stand out to you, what are they?



Hobo | 1950 - 2016 | Pencil on Paper | 82 x 71cm

Identity and Personality

Task: Imagine what the boy in the pictures life was like. What do you think he did for fun? Where do you think he lived?

Q1: Do you think the words and the drawings reflect the artist's impression of the boy?

Q2: Which words would you use to describe him?



This Old Night | 2017 | Pencil on Paper | 211.5 x 157cm

Labour

Task: Look closely at all the lines that make up the texture of the work.

Q1: How have the lines been made? Do you think the artist had a special method for making the lines?

Q2: Have you ever used a “colouring in” book? Was it easy or difficult for you to stay within the lines?



Sleepy Landscape | 2017 | Oil, rattan conical hat and string on canvas | 198.5 x 153cm

Lost and Found

Laith McGregor spends some of his time each year living in Bali – an island nation in Indonesia, to the north of Australia. He has been visiting the island since childhood and his trips continue to inspire and influence his creativity.

Task 1: Think back to the last time you went on a trip or a holiday somewhere.

Q1: Did you bring back souvenirs from your travels? If you did, what were they and what did you do with them?

Task 2: When you get home, try drawing your favourite holiday spot from memory using only a pencil.



One Year | 2014 | Pencil Shavings | 46 x 36cm

Time

Q1: Have you ever thought about how much “waste” you produce in a year? What would the largest portion of the waste be made of?

Task: When you get home, identify some everyday items that collect material over time. For example - hair brushes, vacuum cleaners and doormats.



Istanbul | 2014 | Glazed Ceramic, cue ball, steel and wood | 26 x 14.5 x 13.5cm

Identity and Personality

Task 1: Look closely at the vase, can you see the formation of a face, can you see the cue ball?

Q1: Have you ever used clay, mud, sand or play-doh to make a face? Describe what you made and what materials you used.

Task 2: Spend some time watching the video through the peepholes.

Q2: What was your reaction to the video? Did you feel surprised, uncomfortable, strange, curious...? Describe your reaction.



Tete (Sable) | 2013 | Bronze | 26 x 17cm

Lost and Found

This sculpture was made using the excess clay or “slip” that is normally discarded when an artist is making a larger pottery work. It was then cast in bronze.

Q1: Have you ever reused something you might normally throw away, such as a plastic bottle, cardboard box or glass jar? What did you reuse and how did you find a new use for it?

Q2: How many faces can you see? Can you see anything else in the sculpture?

Task 1: When you get home, find something clean that might be going into the bin, and find a way to give it a new purpose in a creative way.



Untitled (Don Patterson) | 2012 | Oil on board, peep holes, wall | Variable dimensions and *Clay* | 2014 | Single Chanel Digital Video | 10:37min

Time Identity and Personality

Task 1: Look carefully at the portrait on the wall – can you see something unusual about it? Can you look through where the man’s eyes should be?

Q1: What can you see through the peepholes? What did you expect to see?

Task 2: Spend some time watching the video through the peepholes.

Q2: What was your reaction to the video? Did you feel surprised, uncomfortable, strange, curious...? Describe your reaction.

This education resource was developed for Caloundra Regional Gallery by Lyndon Hallows.

The Caloundra Regional Gallery Education Program is proudly supported by Friends Regional Gallery Caloundra Inc.

For Teachers

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