



# EDUCATION KIT

**Laith McGregor: Borrowed Time**

5 October – 2 December 2018 | Tweed Regional Gallery  
Secondary Education Kit

**Image credit:** Laith McGregor | *Sleepy Landscape* (detail) | 2017 | Oil, rattan conical hat and string on canvas | 198.5 x 153cm

## 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 didactics (signage throughout the exhibition and under some of the artworks) 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.

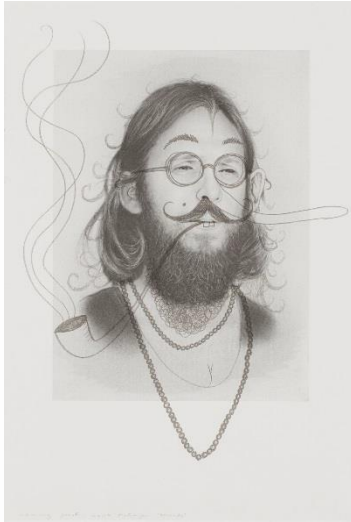
Known for the technical skill of his drawings, McGregor also challenges the traditional definition of authorship, adopting a more collaborative approach for a number of works in 'Borrowed Time'; including a series of drawings from 2016 that use existing images by unknown artists from the early 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

<b>Identity and Personality</b>	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.
<b>Time</b>	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.
<b>Labour</b>	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.
<b>Lost and Found</b>	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



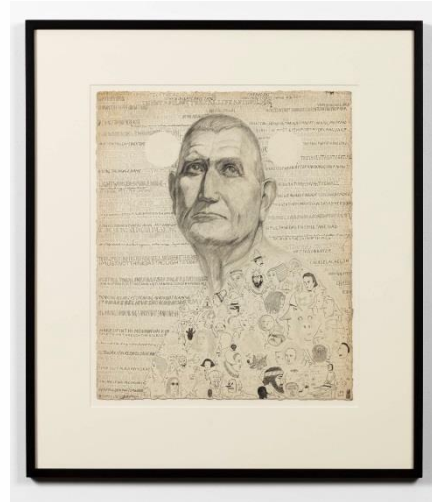
*Animal* | 2013 | Lithograph | 56 x 38cm

### Identity and Personality

**Task 1:** This is a self-portrait of the artist that was produced using print making techniques. The artist then altered a series of these prints in various ways using cartoonish embellishments to create “caricatures” of himself. Think about the ways we make fun of ourselves, and can sometimes be self-deprecating.

**Q1:** Have you ever drawn comical facial features on pictures of people you know or of yourself, such as missing teeth, eye patches, horns or glasses? What was the reaction you received for your alterations?

**Task 2:** Looking at this work, there are clearly humorous elements. Discuss the role that incorporating a personal sense of humour can play in art making.



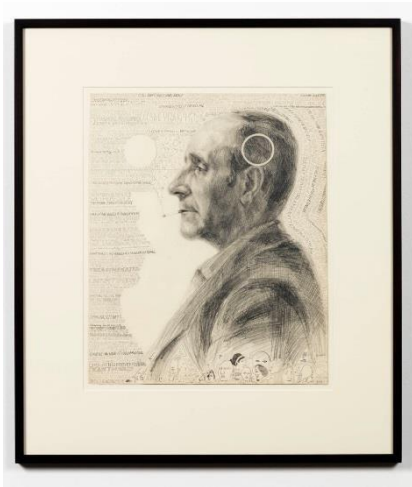
*Chess* | 2016 | Pencil on Paper | 82 x 71cm

### 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:** What do you think the text reveals about the artist's thinking?

**Task 2:** Observe how all the faces in the work are created in different styles, with varying degrees of detail and completion. Think about the minimum amount of detail required to effectively represent a human face. What are those details?



*Posted* | 1950 - 2016 | Pencil on Paper | 82 x 71cm

### Identity and Personality

**Task:** Note the use of the two circle shapes that appear in upper part of this drawing. They are a recurring motif that the artist uses throughout his work.

**Q1:** What do you think the circles symbolise or represent?

**Q2:** Have you ever used a symbol, shape, word or set of letters as a motif or "signature" in your life? What was it and what did you use it for?



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

### Labour

**Task:** The large drawing and paintings are based on "paint by number" templates that were popular in the 1970's and 80's. The artist has taken the layout from one of these DIY scenes and filled in every space between the template with the same monochromatic pencil marks to form the image.

Consider and discuss what his process might be for creating this work and why he used such a limited colour palette.



*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. Did you bring home pictures or souvenirs from your trip?

**Q1:** Why do you think the artist has included a rattan hat in the middle of the drawing?

**Q2:** Look at the title of this work – *Sleepy Landscape* and the similar work titled *Tired Landscape*. Why do you think the artist has used words like tired and sleepy?



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

### Time

**Task:** Read the didactic located on the wall near this artwork.

**Q1:** What does this piece say about how our activities accumulate by-products over time?

**Q2:** What do you think the most interesting by-product in your life is?



*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:** How would you describe the “mood” of this sculpture?

**Task:** Write about and discuss something that you have saved from being thrown away by using it in a new and different 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 – what do you notice that is “not quite right?”

Get right up close to the work and look through the portrait’s eyes.

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

**Task 3:** The installation of ‘Clay’ in *Borrowed Time* incorporates a found work, ‘Untitled’ (Don Patterson) in its installation. It engages with the physical space of the gallery, as well as how you approach and move between the two works and invites you to engage in different ways. Reflect on your experience of this work and how you feel after watching the film and stepping away from the portrait on the wall.

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

Australian F -10 Curriculum V8.3 Links

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## General Capabilities

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- Critical and Creative Thinking
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- Intercultural Understanding

## Cross Curriculum Priorities

- Sustainability
- Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia