

## **Between Language** by Laith McGregor

Art guides a shared gathering of ideas to harness the imagination, to talk of the unseen and grapple with issues that are too difficult to put into words. It is a way of communicating that creates space to transform and challenge our perception. Throughout human history, art has been the one consistent language that allows humans to navigate the lived experience, to look for the gravitas of truth, to question the existence and that which cannot be explained. Art gives us a sense of the moment, of the now, it's a way of connecting and sharing ideas through the sensory, a way to surrender and explore the in-between collectively. But more importantly, art is the key to guide and search for answers of why we are here.

But how does one locate this grey area between fact and fiction, love and hate, the real and the unreal, what is right and what is wrong, and all things binary? It is these contradictory oppositions that we all must navigate, with an unrelenting slippage between the two. We could look at life like train tracks, running off into the distance, parallel to each other, but working together to propel a momentum. In order to move forward, one can simply not exist without the other, here a new space is created linking these polar opposites. We must ask ourselves, how do these parallels function in daily life and within a broader cultural environment? And how do we manoeuvre in this seemingly paradoxical space? Are we to feel our way through life living on the tightrope between binaries or embrace what is in-between?

This year's artists for the Art Byron explore this liminal space, each considering how we interpret what's going on, in and around us, literally and metaphorically. The ambitious exhibition hosts an eclectic array of mixed media, showcased in resonant locations around the shire. Each artist has the innate ability to reflect moments that represent deeper currents of the human experience. The work chosen for this contemporary art gathering gives us a sense of the moment, from geopolitical issues, to climate concerns, through to simple investigations of the senses. Sometimes it's the simple act of being creative, making something for the hell of it and following an inner calling that can become reflective, poignant and important. One must follow intuition and trust in the process in order to find their voice regardless of the chosen medium. Art has the power to conjure the unknown, to channel the undercurrent of society and charge the zeitgeist. Each exhibiting artist and their respective work open questions for the audience to consider, digest and reflect.

Art Byron allows for a moment of celebration, to upend the norm, to enable a moment of reflection on the allure of the unseen, to embrace the threshold of the unknown, to challenge ideas and move forward with a positive impetus. The world needs agency on matters of difference, a bridge must be placed between spheres of dissimilarity. Artists have the unique capability to connect, correspond ideas, to give us hope, solace and faith in humanity. As we have seen time and again, artists are often ahead of the curve, thinking of the metaphysical, one foot in front of the mainstream, using a language of their own, forming a new set of rules, a new vocabulary, a between language.

Art Byron is about connection and celebration, a gathering of ideas and a supportive space for the conviction that arts power has within the makeup of the everyday. Through the lens of contemporary art, we are able to make sense of the world we live in and find hope in the beauty of the unknown. As Olivia Laing wrote on art;

***“...it does have some extraordinary functions, some odd negotiating ability between people, including people who never meet and yet who infiltrate and enrich each other's lives. It does have a capacity to create intimacy; it does have a way of healing wounds, and better yet of making it apparent that not all wounds need healing and not all scars are ugly.’***

The weight of art resonates. Its propensity for power, even subtle shifts, is palpable and encouraging in this moment in time.