

Good afternoon.

My name is Amy Kennedy and I have the pleasure of opening Lilach Mileikowski's solo exhibition, *Sustenance* here in Gallery 2 at the Glen Eira City Council.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

I would also like to acknowledge all of you for being here to support and celebrate Lilach and pay my respect to your ancestors wherever they are from.

Lilach Mileikowski's work is like no other.

As we stand together in this room, I think you can all see this and in fact feel it.

Lilach's work is complex. Complex in the weighty ideas she is moved to explore and weave together. Complex in the materials and processes she employs and in fact invents. And complex in the writing she crafts, a generous invitation for us into her world.

It is a challenge to speak about such complex works in a short opening statement and do them justice. So, I will focus on a few areas that for me are particularly important.

Like all good art Lilach's work make us ask questions. What are these strange objects that hold so much power and yet appear so vulnerable? Familiar *and* foreign. Where did they come from? The past, the present, the future even? How did they come to be made? Why are they here?

These works appear as though they are each a break away from a larger structure, that has perished, and these parts are what remains, persevering, still standing, the test of time.

Lilach creates this atmosphere, in part, from her unique approach to her chosen materials - Clay, glaze, fabric, steel wire, screen print.

This is not an easy business, let me tell you. To not only create and construct with these diverse materials, but to then subject them to immense heat and transformation in the firing process, sometimes repeatedly. This takes time, dedication, great understanding, and a willingness to be ok with *always* working on the edge.

Lilach's works are complete and whole in themselves, but as you can see, they are made of multiple parts, individual vessels, some vase or bottle like, and in her newest works (The Cocooned and Nestled Series) a cellular structure. Her work reminds us of the natural need for *living* beings to come together and connect for greater strength, she writes in one of her passages - *the singular is supported by the whole and the whole is united by the singular. Repeat*

I have had the pleasure of working closely with Lilach for several years and have admired her work for longer than that. In my opinion she has reached a new level with her work, as she uses the writing of cherished family members to fuel her sculptures. It is a vulnerable undertaking to embrace the deeply personal in your own work and share it with others. There can be hesitation in doing this. Will it be too personal and not offer a way in for those experiencing the works? The adage, *the personal is the universal*, holds true for a reason.

I encourage you to read her special statements for Nestled and Aba Tells me a story, and in fact Draped in Grief, (point to them). Read them slowly and carefully.

You are viewing this exhibition in this moment and moments, the commitment of this artist, her talent and rigorous thinking are evident. What may not be evident is the hard work and organisation over many months to make this exhibition a reality. A testament to Lilach's dedication and vision for her work.

I would like to officially open Sustenance, this important exhibition by Lilach Mileikowski and I invite you to put your hands together to celebrate Lilach and her work. And I invite Lilach to say a few words.

Thank you.