

The West Australian

# TODAY

## Light work

Meet the artist preparing to illuminate the city like never before



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MONDAY  
February 20, 2023

# City of light



Acclaimed visual artist Michaela Gleave's lighting installation is set to cast its spell over Perth next month — and you can help her create it

Tanya MacNaughton



Michaela Gleave's experience of growing up in north-west Tasmania, before the internet, meant she was only introduced to contemporary art at age 18 while on a gap year in Europe.

And it totally blew her mind. "I stumbled across the Venice Biennale, which I hadn't even heard of before, with a work by Belgian artist Ann Veronica Janssens where she had filled the Belgian pavilion in Venice with a dense fog," Gleave recounts. "Vision was obscured and the fog was so dense, the audience had to move very slowly, so there was a distinct impression that time had been slowed down. I thought 'wow, if art can slow down time, it doesn't get any better than that and this is what I want to do with my life'."

"And I felt like she had co-opted the audience as a performer. Those two things combined, for me, struck such a chord and had such a massive influence on the subsequent artwork I've made myself."

Gleave's career in installation art led to project Messages of Hope, Messages of Love at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 2020, in collaboration with lighting designer Fausto Brusamolino.

The COVID-19 response artwork

not only allowed people to communicate during lockdown but also offered a physical piece while everyone was unable to enter gallery spaces.

It has since been presented in Adelaide and Melbourne and is coming to Perth Festival for the final nights of this year's program, under the next iteration of the work, Between Us.

"It's a large-scale lighting installation working with Morse code where we beam messages, submitted by the general public, up as Morse code into the sky, with a simultaneous livestream that has a subtitled text of what each message is," the Sydney-based artist says.

"It's a public art project and I'm very interested in working in public space as a way of accessing audiences who might not otherwise go to the gallery or engage with public art. It's exciting to break free of the gallery walls."

Gleave — who has shown works at Fremantle Arts Centre, PICA and is the artist behind permanent artwork We Are Made of Stardust at The Rechabite — is calling for public message submissions, which she will process and arrange into a poem, to be transmitted in beams of Morse code from the Art Gallery of Western Australia Rooftop.

"It's interesting because each



city has a different vibe and I guess that's indicative of the timing when each project happens," she says.

"I just welcome all messages, basically. Don't be fearful, and people can submit as many messages as they like. This doesn't have to be a grand statement to end all statements, it can be as heartfelt or as personal as you like and is completely anonymous.

"It's a very grand scope. The prompt is to respond to the phrase 'between us' so people can either complete that phrase or they don't have to use those words in their response, just to consider what might exist between us."

Successful submitters will receive an email when their inclusion in the project is confirmed, outlining the time it will be transmitted into the night sky so they can share that with a recipient, or in the case of a marriage proposal (there have been two so far), their partner.

Viewing can be either in person or online via a livestream.

**"It's like opening up a box of secret messages."**

"It's like opening up a box of secret messages," Gleave laughs. "There are always surprises and what's exciting is that it's not me, I'm opening up my practice for a collaborative poem. So inviting those messages in, is always tremendously humbling and I feel like it's a great privilege for people to entrust what are sometimes deeply personal sentiments."

To submit your message visit [perthfestival.com.au](http://perthfestival.com.au). Submissions close February 24.

Between Us is at the AGWA Rooftop from March 3-6.

Above: Michaela Gleave on the AGWA Rooftop. Picture: Corey James  
Left: Gleave's Messages of Hope, Messages of Love. Picture: Diana Panuccio