# Mayor launches Eamon McAteer’s cathartic ‘Narratives’ exhibition for NI Mental Health Arts Festival



The Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Councillor Lilian Seenoi-Barr, has officially launched the solo exhibition ‘Narratives’ by artist Eamon McAteer at the Alley Theatre in Strabane. This exhibition is part of the annual Northern Ireland Mental Health Arts Festival, which runs from May 9 to May 20. This year, the festival centres around the theme ‘CathARTSis,’ cleverly playing on the notion of catharsis.

The launch event attracted a diverse audience, including family, friends, art educators, and fellow artists, all there to celebrate McAteer's significant body of work. During the launch, Mayor Seenoi-Barr spoke about the critical role of the festival, highlighting its aim to foster hope within the community. "The NI Mental Health Arts Festival is a powerful initiative which brings hope to many in our community," she remarked. She further emphasised the importance of artistic expression in providing a "compassionate space" where individuals can share personal experiences, connect, and find solace through creativity.

McAteer expressed his enthusiasm for being part of the festival. In his words, “I am delighted to be exhibiting my solo show of paintings, ‘Narratives’, at the Alley Theatre as part of the NI Mental Health Arts Festival." He described how his work resonates with the theme of catharsis, aiming to offer something "personal, individual and honest." His paintings draw on emotional responses borne from various influences, capturing a sense of intimacy and intensity reminiscent of the Irish expressionist landscape tradition.

Noelle McAlinden, co-chair of the NI Mental Health Arts Festival, highlighted the exhibition's ability to inspire audiences of all ages. She stated, "There is no doubt that Eamon's exhibition provides a wonderful opportunity to inspire and enthuse audiences young and old. Exhibitions like this help to show the power of the arts and the vital role our artists contribute to the inspiration and well-being of others."

‘Narratives’ will remain on display at the Alley Theatre until May 30, concurrent with the broader festival activities. The festival features a rich programme that includes poetry, comedy, dance, theatre, and more, designed to promote mental health awareness through the arts. Notably, two major symposiums are scheduled for May 9 in Belfast and May 20 in the Guildhall, providing platforms for dialogue, performances, and insights from those with lived experience in health, arts, and community.

In addition to McAteer's exhibition, other artists are being celebrated during the festival, including Derry-based Bronagh Corr McNicholl, whose photographic exhibition is touring both cities, beginning at The Garden of Reflection in Derry before moving to Belfast Exposed. Justine Scoltock's exhibition, “Hidden Layers,” is also being showcased in the Garden of Reflection throughout May.

For a complete overview of the festival and its offerings, details can be found on the official website of the Northern Ireland Mental Health Arts Festival.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nimhaf.org/> - This is the official website of the Northern Ireland Mental Health Arts Festival (NIMHAF), which provides information about the festival's events, themes, and objectives, including the 2023 festival's focus on 'Myths'.
* <https://www.nimhaf.org/2023-festival-events-240423> - This page lists the events scheduled for the 2023 NIMHAF, including exhibitions, workshops, and performances, highlighting the festival's diverse programme.
* <https://www.nimhaf.org/displaced-exhibition> - This exhibition, titled 'Displaced', is part of the 2023 NIMHAF and features works by individuals with acquired brain injuries, aligning with the festival's theme of addressing mental health through art.
* <https://www.impartialreporter.com/news/19283779.noelle-speaks-artists-mental-health-part-ni-mental-health-arts-festival/> - This article discusses Noelle McAlinden's involvement in the NIMHAF, where she engages with artists about mental health, reflecting the festival's commitment to fostering conversations around mental health and creativity.
* <https://belfastmedia.com/northern-ireland-mental-health-arts-festival-launch> - This source provides details about the NIMHAF's launch, including the theme 'PAUSE' and the symposiums hosted by the Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District Council, emphasizing the festival's focus on mental health and creativity.
* <https://www.artsandhealth.ie/2024/04/30/northern-ireland-mental-health-arts-festival-celebrates-its-10th-anniversary/> - This article celebrates the 10th anniversary of the NIMHAF, highlighting its growth and impact in promoting mental health awareness through the arts, and mentions the symposiums hosted by the Mayor of Derry City & Strabane District Council.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMiyAFBVV95cUxQclNmRWd2WS1PZXBKVUpqREFrMWVyNGptOGRKdkdsemE5OVZ5SGZOYlJtTzE4b3hJZEZ3eV9kVkZnQlRWc3JZU3BsQm9TYl9DU005YzVBdmhTa0kyR2ppS2V5NFZnMTFBQ2dLMGh5dUROak9qQWh1S2s0XzFzVnYxbXl6cXVTRHBkZjFfM1NaVkQ1SURobjlLSjlGTjhsTXNjQUQ4Q1c5UHV1Z3BRX0lCcGxRMEZJa2VNRDgtemhLZHk0dVNmbVJkRw?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data