The Space Between

"We shape clay into a pot, but it is the emptiness inside that holds whatever we want."
— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*

A familiar line about music invites us to listen differently: the meaning of a composition may lie not only in its notes, but in the intervals that let them be heard. The space between is not empty. It is active: a pause, a passage, a relation. In The Space Between, nine artists bring distinct practices into a shared room. Their works do not resolve into a single answer. Instead, each encounter opens a further question about what can happen between image and object, memory and present, nature and technology, seeing and understanding.

The contrast is especially vivid between AD-Reflex's illuminated train stations and Sarah Ballam's water. AD-Reflex builds digital images through software and drawing tools, then transfers them to materials such as Perspex, where LED light gives the layered scenes a suspended glow. A station is a place of movement, yet in these works the journey seems held between departure and arrival. Ballam's painted water also makes a passage of its surface. In her oil paintings, bodies and horizons shift between clarity and dissolution; reflection both reveals and distorts. One artist makes light through a contemporary image-making system, the other works slowly with pigment and brush, but both ask us to look at what happens at a threshold.

That threshold changes character in the work of Karen Harkema and Lothar Böttcher. Harkema begins with technology not as a distant screen or an invisible cloud, but as a physical thing. Drawing on her earlier life in computing, she dismantles electronic equipment and reworks wires, circuits and plastics through processes associated with textile, assemblage and sculpture. In Data in Bloom, what is usually hidden inside a device becomes visible and tactile: a record of systems we have made and now live among. Böttcher turns to optical crystal, carving and polishing it by hand in a slow, physical and irreversible process. His Photon works bring light, lens and perception into focus. Harkema takes the machine apart; Böttcher makes us attend to the instrument through which we see. Between them, technology is at once material and mediation.

Daniel Solomon's landscapes hold one foot in painting's long tradition and another in a present shaped by circuitry, LEDs and digital tools. They become meeting places between the analogue world we inhabit and the digitally mediated one we are building. When image, light and electricity converge, what happens to our sense of presence and place?

Against these rapidly changing tools, the oil paintings of Ballam, Mfundo Mthiyane and Nhlanhla Nhlapo carry time in a different way. Oil paint has a long history: some of the earliest surviving oil paintings are seventh-century Buddhist works from Afghanistan, while oil became a major medium in European painting from the fifteenth century. Its long life is held in the material itself. Layers can be built, softened and revised; drying between layers can slow the work and give the painter time to consider what has already been laid down. Digital tools make many revisions immediate and remove the wait for paint to dry, but they do not remove the time of attention or decision. The difference is not simply old versus new. It is between different kinds of duration, touch and consequence.

Mthiyane's mythic, inward scenes turn symbols from the natural world into a language for psychology and spirituality. Nhlapo brings family photographs and ancestry into South African landscapes, using the techniques of seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting as a point of departure. The past is not a distant backdrop in his work; it enters the present through remembered faces and places. Ballam's water,

meanwhile, lets the figure appear and recede. These works meet across very different subjects, yet each makes time visible: as inner life, inherited memory, or the continual transformation of a surface.

Simon Venter's acrylic portraits offer another bridge. His practice brings traditional painting into contact with contemporary questions of identity, mythology and technology. The portrait is both an image of a person and a space in which older symbols can be seen anew. Beside Venter, Anton Smit's Nubian Heads return us to the face in sculptural form. Smit is widely known for monumental heads and figures that evoke suffering, reconciliation, glory and sublimation. Here the face becomes a presence with physical weight: something we encounter from outside, while wondering at the inner life it withholds. Painting and sculpture, image and object, particular likeness and shared human form press against one another without becoming the same.

This is where the exhibition's title becomes an invitation. A train station is shaped by the journeys it holds; water by the light and bodies that cross its surface; crystal by what it refracts; a portrait by the distance between the face we see and the person we imagine. Even the meeting of oil, acrylic, glass, circuitry, LED and sculpture creates a space in which one way of seeing can unsettle another. Meaning is not always contained within a work alone. It can emerge in the interval: when a memory meets a landscape, when a machine becomes material, when light passes through glass, or when one artist's question changes how we look at the next.

The Space Between asks us to notice those intervals. What first appears to be empty space may be where attention gathers, where a connection becomes possible, and where we allow meaning to enter.