



**COUNIHAN
GALLERY
IN BRUNSWICK**



Merri-bek
City Council

Merri-bek City Council

Applying for a Counihan Gallery Exhibition - 2027

May 2026

Image:

Heidi Holmes, *Witching
Hour (II)*. 2026.
Photo: Simon Fazio

Acknowledgement of Country

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We would like to acknowledge that the Counihan Gallery is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

It was taken from them without a treaty process, consent, or compensation, and sovereignty was never ceded.

We wish to acknowledge them as the traditional owners and custodians of these lands and waterways and would also like to pay our respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of this area, and Elders of other communities who may be joining us today.



Image:

Peta Clancy's artwork in
*Future River: When the past
flows*, 2024.

Photo: Simon Fazio

About the Counihan Gallery

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Our context

- **The public gallery for Merri-bek City Council**
 - Entry to exhibitions and programs is free
 - The Gallery is not a commercial space, which means it doesn't handle sales or take commission
 - The Gallery presents a changing program of contemporary art exhibitions
 - Exhibitions are programmed through our EOI process and by invitation
 - Representatives of the Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee sit on the EOI exhibition assessment and selection panel

Our focus

- **Art as activism**
 - Art that explores political, environmental or social justice issues
 - The Gallery is named after Noel Counihan, an artist and activist who championed workers' rights and free speech
- **Contemporary art**
- **An exhibition program that is diverse**
 - Artists working across a range of media
 - Group and solo exhibitions
 - Early and mid-career artists
 - Backgrounds and perspectives that represent Merri-bek's communities and Council's Human Rights Priority Groups

About the Counihan Gallery Team

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Linda Short

Team Leader Gallery & Arts Program

Josh Simpson

Visual Arts Officer

Jessica Ibacache

Arts Development Officer

Phuong Ngo

Public Arts Officer

Gallery Attendants & Exhibition Technicians

Leon Van de Graaf

Eamon Sprod

Steph Siu

Vicki Nguyen

India Mackie

Thuy Danh

Jessie Turner

Hanna Sandgren



Image:

ENOKi: MULANA, 2026.

Photo: Simon Fazio

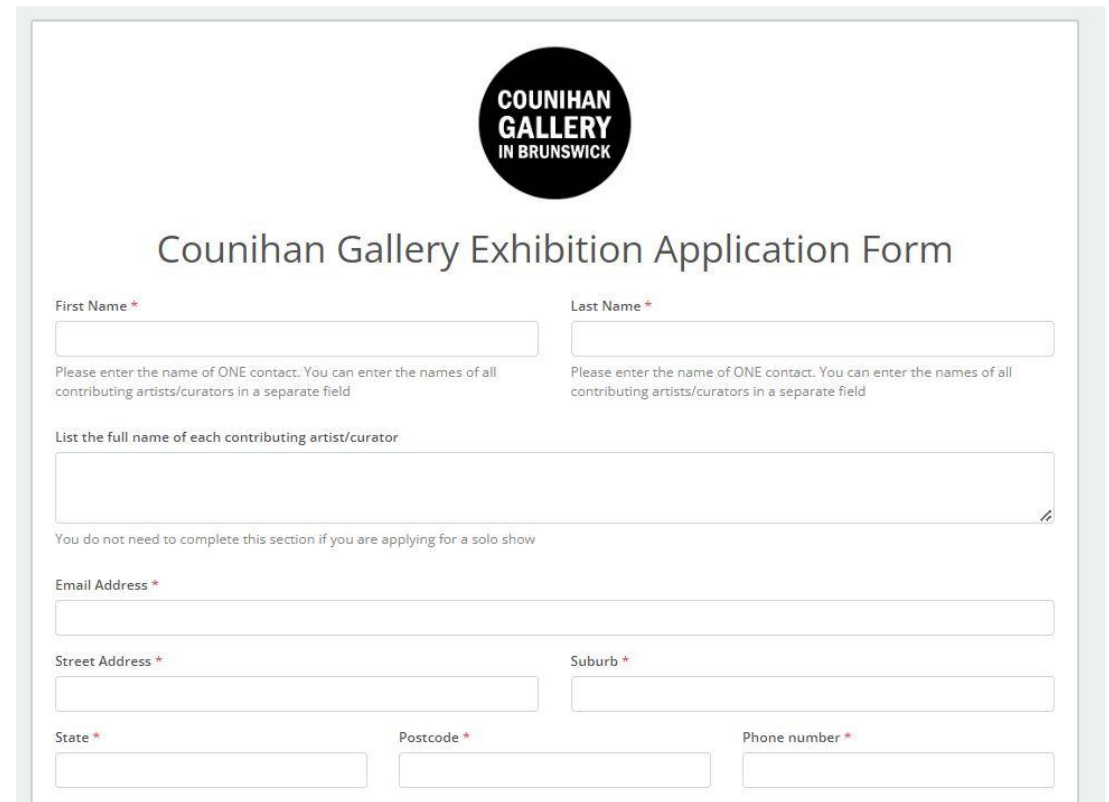
About the Exhibition Call Out

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- One call out per year. Open until Friday 12 June, 5pm
- Applications can be submitted at any time during the proposals period but will only be assessed after the application deadline
- Applications are submitted through an online form. We also accept hardcopy forms or video applications on request
- This year, artists can apply for the Front Gallery, Middle Gallery or Rear Gallery
- We schedule exhibitions at least one year in advance.
- Exhibitions run for approximately 12 weeks
- We receive up to 100 applications annually, and have between 6 to 8 exhibition slots to offer each year
- Applications are assessed by Council arts and culture staff, a member from the Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee and an independent arts professional



The screenshot shows the 'Counihan Gallery Exhibition Application Form'. At the top center is the COUNIHAN GALLERY IN BRUNSWICK logo. Below the logo is the title 'Counihan Gallery Exhibition Application Form'. The form contains several input fields: 'First Name *' and 'Last Name *' (each with a text box and a note: 'Please enter the name of ONE contact. You can enter the names of all contributing artists/curators in a separate field'); a large text area for 'List the full name of each contributing artist/curator' (with a note: 'You do not need to complete this section if you are applying for a solo show'); 'Email Address *'; 'Street Address *' and 'Suburb *' (each with a text box); and 'State *', 'Postcode *', and 'Phone number *' (each with a text box).

Proposal Assessment

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Selection criteria

We are looking for exhibition proposals that:

- Demonstrate innovation and quality in visual arts practice.
- Focus on social, political, environmental or cultural commentary.
- Present a coherent body of work.
- Engage with the Merri-bek community.
- Include high-quality artwork images that support the application (these can be indicative or representative and do not need to be the final exhibited works)



spectral sentiments by Jing Liang, 2025. Simon Aubor.

Application Call Out - changes

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- Seeking proposals for two exhibition seasons instead of three
- Season 1: Feb to May 2027
- Season 2: May to Aug 2027
- Can apply for all three gallery spaces instead of two (resulting in the same number of opportunities)
- Potential opportunities for 2028 programming
- Increased honorarium to \$1,500 per exhibition space
- A separate Expression of Interest process will open in 2027 for the Winter Night Screen.

Installation view of *Marvellous Mythical Mates: A Menagerie of Dream Pets*, 2024, Vipoo Srivilasa. Photo Simon Strong



About the Exhibition Spaces



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- The Galleries can be divided into individual spaces or opened as a large continuous space. All together, the Front, Middle and Rear Galleries have approximately 85 running metres of wall space (not including partition walls)
- There is up to approximately 35 metres of additional wall space using partitions
- Group exhibitions can be proposed for two adjoining spaces
- Solo exhibitions are typically only considered for one space



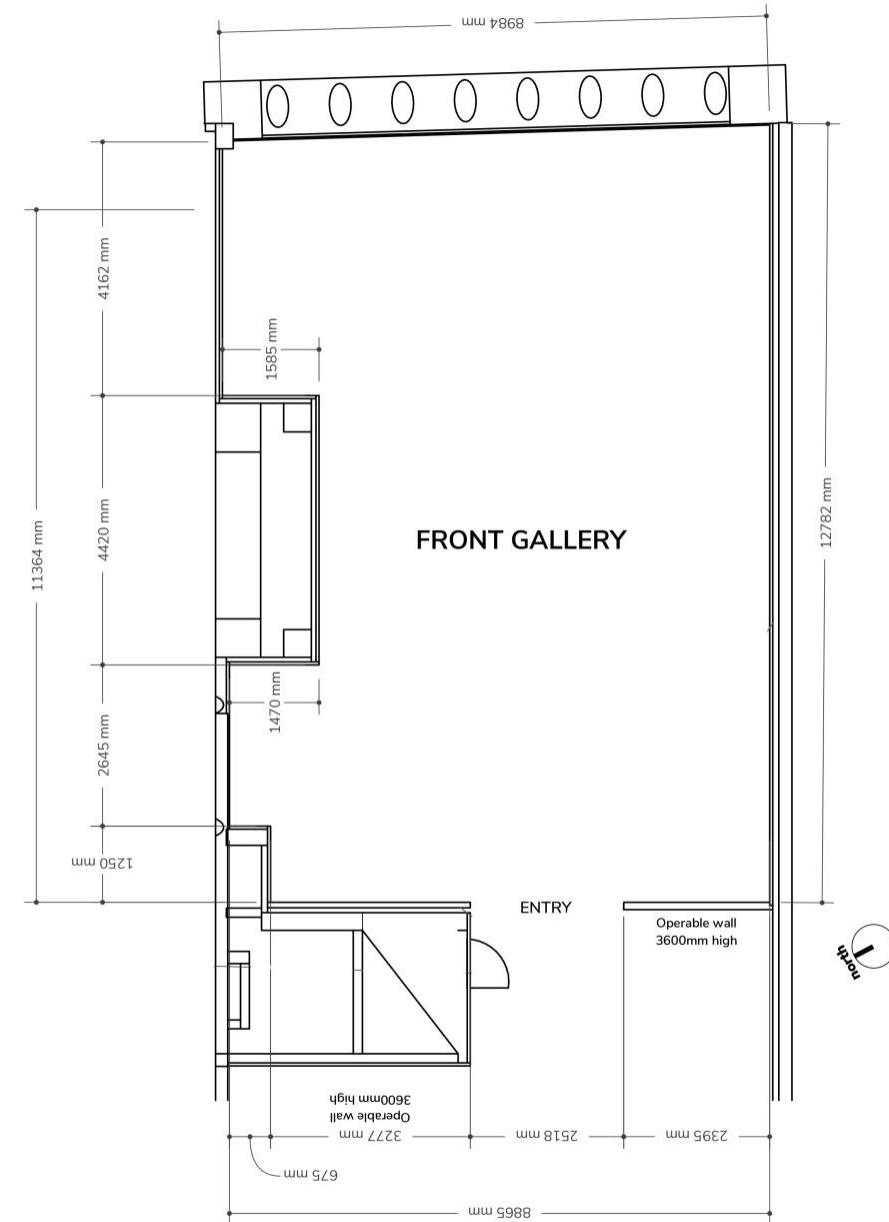
Opening event for Merri-bek Summer Show: *Love In Crisis*,
2025 Photo @Wildhardt

Front Gallery

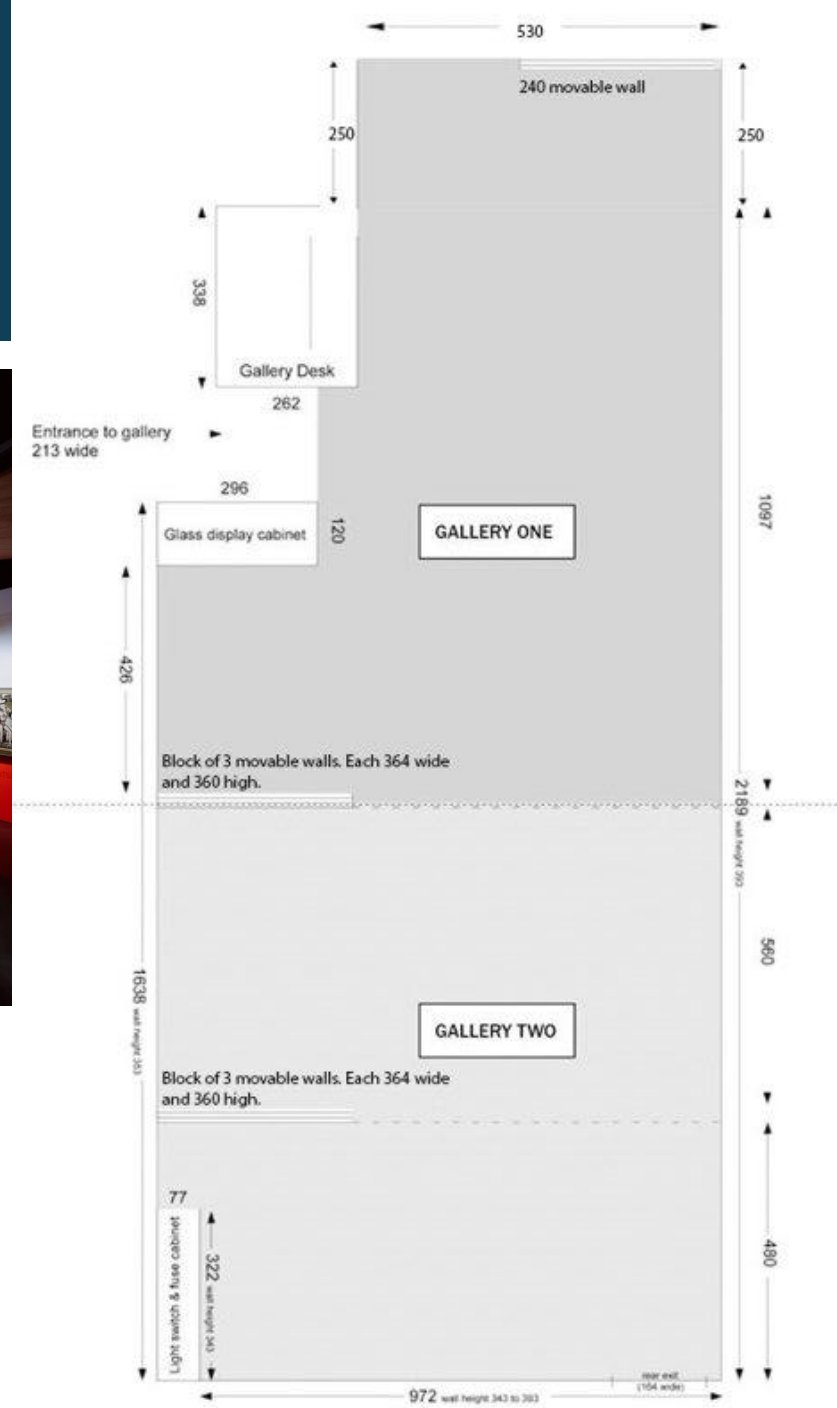


Installation view of *heavy body history*, curated by Maya Hodge, 2025.

Photos: Yaseera Moosa



Middle Gallery



Left: *Fairy Tales from the Celestial Garden*, Jayanto Tan, 2025. Photo: Simon Fazio

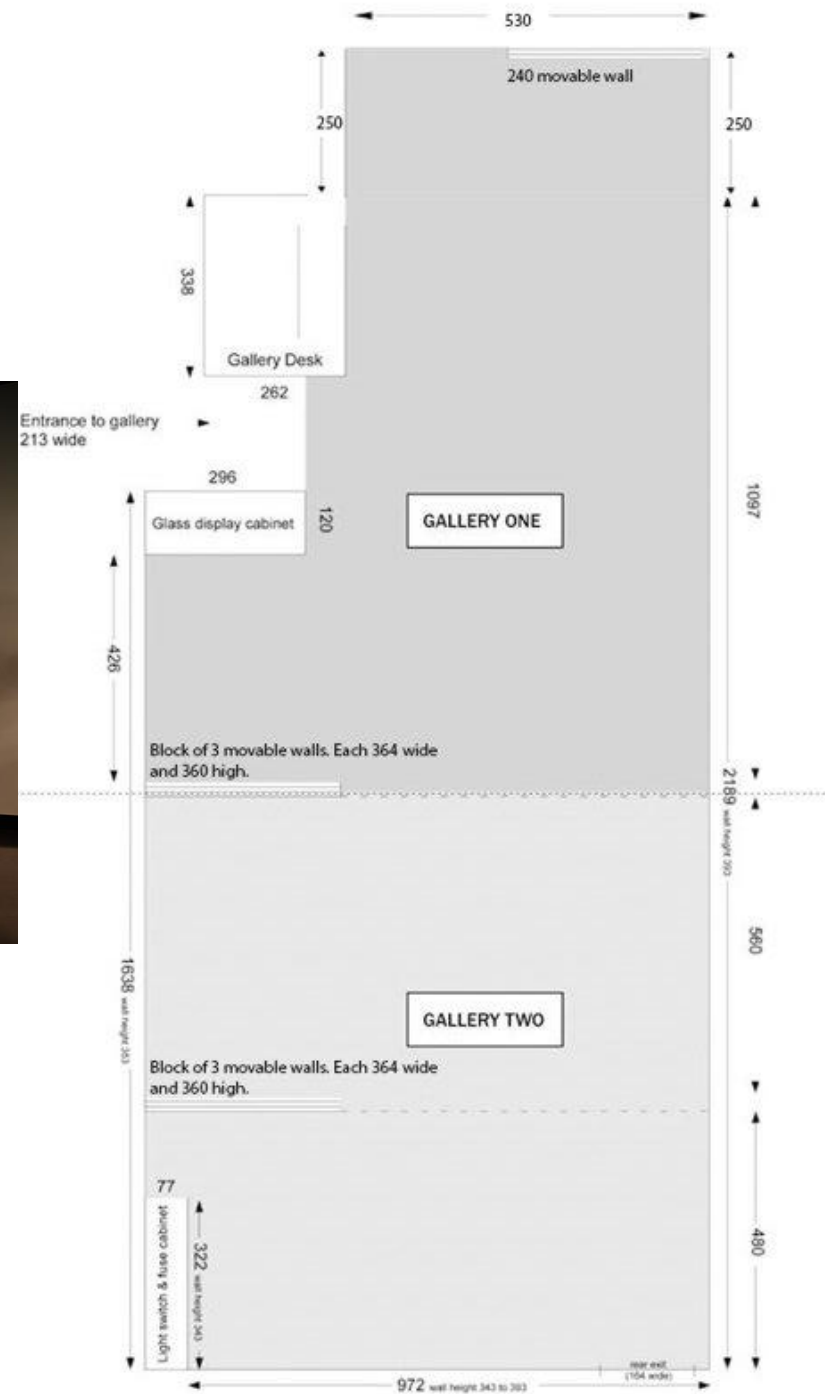
Right: *Future Foundations*, curated by Troppo Print Studio, 2024. Photo: Simon Fazio

Rear Gallery



After Epilogue, Judy Kong, 2026.

Photo (left): Bobbi Gan. Photo (right): Simon Fazio



Application Tips

Good images

High resolution

A combination of installation views of previous exhibitions and individual artworks

Images should be representative of the proposed exhibition

Project description

Use plain English (avoid jargon, art-speak, overly wordy sentences)

Ensure the description matches the images

Explain why the exhibition should be shown at the Counihan Gallery

Website and social media

We often refer to this when discussing the shortlist

A good idea to have a website, which gives the opportunity to showcase your entire body of work

Realistic and deliverable

Is your application dependent on funding?

Are all artists confirmed and committed to the exhibition?

Have you considered the tech requirements? The size of the exhibition space?

Have you considered your schedule?

Gallery alignment

Political, environmental and social justice themes

Contemporary and innovative

Unique perspective and something important to say

How to avoid taking bad images

What to avoid:

- 'Dutch tilt' or 'fish eye' (do not distort your image, or take your image on an oblique angle)
- Extreme cropping
- Blurry or low-resolution images
- Inconsistent colouring of images (either through yellow lighting or post-production editing/filters)
- Over or under exposed images (too washed out/bright, or too dark and grainy)
- Black and white images
- What might be good for social media is not necessarily good for an exhibition proposal



How to take good images

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Tips for good documentation:

- Photograph your artworks straight on
- If documenting an exhibition, it can help to take your photos from each corner of the room
- Use a tripod or flat surface to rest your camera on
- For close-ups of artworks, use a neutral background such as a white wall

Installation view of *Beacon*, produced by Arts Access Victoria, 2025. Photo Christo Crocker



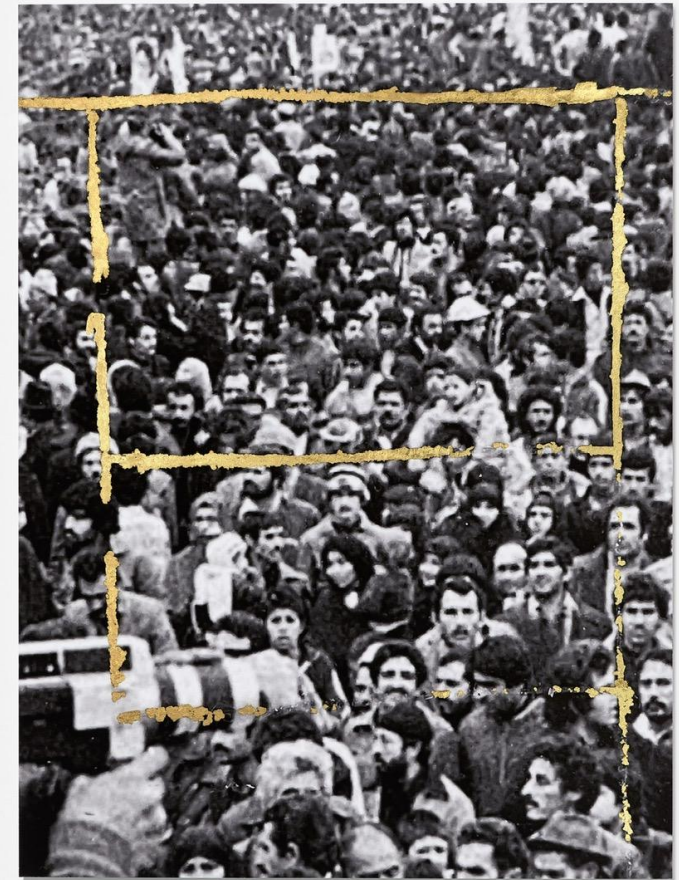
Good quality images (examples)



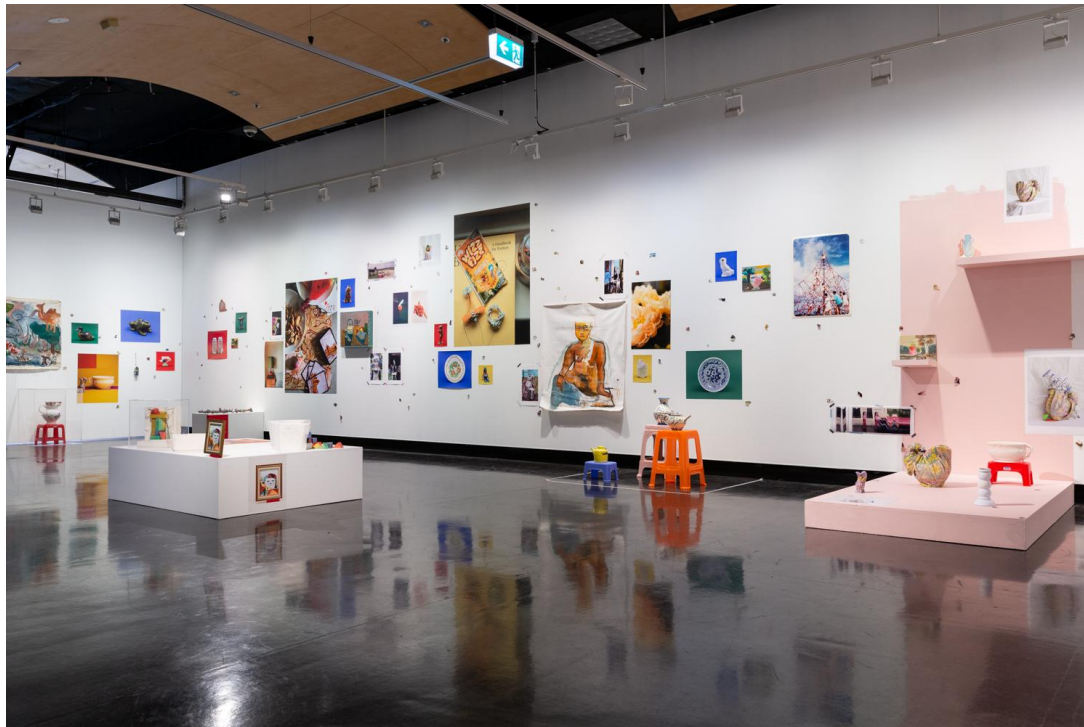
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Images by Chris Crocker of Hootan Heydari's show *Yeki Bood, Yeki Nabood*, 2022.



Good quality images (examples)



Images by Janelle Low of *Peonies*, *Still Life* and *a Duck*, 2023

What the Counihan Gallery provides



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- Professional assistance from Gallery staff in the development and coordination of the exhibition
- An exhibition honorarium of \$1,500
- Assistance with exhibition design, installation and lighting
- Access to audio-visual equipment, including media players, sound system, digital projectors and televisions
- A variety of support structures for display purposes
- Design and production of signage and exhibition texts
- Major aspects of marketing the exhibition, such as media release, e-newsletters, social media engagement and exhibition listings
- Staffing of the Gallery during opening hours
- Gallery staff assistance at exhibition openings
- Catering for exhibition openings
- After hours alarm protection and security
- Resourcing for accessibility requirements
- Resourcing for an associated public program



Installation view, Ayman Kaake, *Stones Will Remain Stones*, 2025, mixed media installation, 230 x 285 x 100 cm (foreground) and *See*, 2025, single channel video, 6 minutes 47 seconds (background).
Photo: Simon Aubor

What you will need to provide



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- Deliver the exhibition as proposed in your application
- Professionalism (punctuality, communication, integrity)
- Provide Gallery staff with an exhibition description and artwork details for the promotion of the exhibition
- Provide a selection of high-quality digital images for marketing and publicity purposes
- Assist with the installation and deinstallation of the exhibition
- Organise the delivery and collection of artworks to and from Gallery (costs to be met by the exhibitor)
- Provide any additional advertising or publicity materials to Gallery staff for approval before distribution (costs to be met by the exhibitor)
- Consider developing public programs in conversation with Gallery staff, such as artist talks or workshops
- Maximise audience engagement by sharing your project with your networks and being available for publicity opportunities
- Ensure the accessibility of your exhibition (to be assisted by Gallery staff)



Installation view, Judy Kuo, *Not a fine artist, just a "fine" artist*, 2026, Photo Simon Fazio

Planning for Accessibility



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- Low-level or disorienting lighting
- Moving or flashing images
- Sound
- Captioned audio of people speaking
- For uncaptioned audio of people speaking, consider including a transcript
- Optical illusions
- Trip hazards (such as floor-based works)
- Installations that may be difficult for wheelchair users to navigate
- Adult or sensitive content (please specify)
- Other (please specify)
- Consider possible online programs as well as in-person events



Installation view of *Beacon*, produced by Arts Access Victoria, 2025.
Photo Christo Crocker

Counihan Public Programs

- Artist led programming for the community
- Purpose is to increase audience engagement for the Gallery & attendance for the artist's exhibition
- Examples include creative workshop, panel discussion, performance
- Free or low cost for the community
- Artists are paid an additional artist fee, plus material costs



Cut the Roots Off. Performance at the opening event of *Pit Yourself Against* by Ma Ei, 2026. Simon Fazio

Public Programs



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Artist talk for *spectral sentiments* by Jing Liang, 2025. Simon Auber.



Flying Fish performance at the opening event of *Yellow Paint* by Mark du Potiers , 2025. Simon Fazio



Objects Once Held drawing activity in *Things I Carried Quietly* by Nani Puspasari , 2026. Simon Fazio

Public Programs



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Royal Icing Workshop as part of K is for Kitab Tabakh by Deanna Hitti, 2024.

Other opportunities at the Counihan Gallery

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Merri-bek Summer Show

- The Merri-bek Summer Show is an annual exhibition held at the Counihan Gallery
- Each year, local artists are invited to submit an artwork that explores a chosen theme
- There is a cash prize for an outstanding artwork that engages with political, environmental or social justice themes
- Free to apply, free to exhibit



Opening event for Merri-bek Summer Show: (be)Longoing, 2024

Key Dates and Timeline

Key information	
Applications open:	12pm, Friday 24 April 2026
Applications close:	5pm, Friday 12 June 2026
Exhibition dates:	February – May 2027 (Season 1) May – August 2027 (Season 2)
Exhibition duration:	Approximately 12 weeks
Exhibition spaces:	Front, Middle and Rear Galleries
Exhibition honorarium:	\$1,500 per exhibition space
Who can apply:	Solo artists, collaborators, groups of artists, and curators
Application cost:	Free
Submissions:	Submit your application via the Exhibition Application Form
Applicants notified:	Early August 2026

Do you have any questions?

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