



Merri-bek
City Council

Counihan Gallery

Merri-bek Summer Show 2026

Application Pack



Merri-bek Summer Show 2026

Present Tense: 10 Years On

About the 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.

This year's Merri-bek Summer Show theme is:

Present Tense: 10 Years On

Marking ten years of the Noel Counihan Commemorative Art Award, this year's exhibition invites local artists to consider **how the past decade has shaped the present moment and what defines the here and now for them.**

Responses could reflect on:

- What has changed for better or worse?
- What challenges have endured?
- What issues still demand attention?
- What kind of future is being imagined?

The theme is open to interpretation and can be explored through personal and local stories, political ideas, social issues, environmental concerns, everyday experiences and more.

This year's theme is also shared with the Merri-bek Libraries Short Story Competition. Winners of the Noel Counihan Commemorative Art Award, Climate Activism Award, and the Short Story Competition, will be announced at the exhibition celebration event on Saturday 5 December.

Following the success of last year's children's gallery, we will be inviting young artists to respond to the new theme through postcard-sized drawings. Young people can create their artworks at our activity station in the Gallery during the exhibition. The completed drawings will be exhibited on the front windows of the Counihan Gallery throughout January after the exhibition has closed.

Awards

Noel Counihan Commemorative Art Award

The Counihan Gallery is pleased to present the 10th Noel Counihan Commemorative Art Award.

The Award celebrates an artist whose work explores the exhibition theme and engages with social, political, or environmental ideas. All exhibitors at the Merri-bek Summer Show are eligible for the Award.

The Award recipient will receive \$4000. This prize is generously sponsored by Merri-bek City Council. The Award is non-acquisitive.

The Award is judged by Counihan Gallery staff, a panel member from the Merri-bek Arts Advisory Committee and an independent arts professional. The recipient is announced at the exhibition opening event.

People's Choice Award

The People's Choice Award is a cash prize of \$1000 and is proudly supported by the Sydney Road Street Association.

The Award is voted by visitors to the Merri-bek Summer Show and the recipient is announced at the end of the exhibition.

Climate Activism Award

This award celebrates an artist whose work engages with climate justice ideas. The prize is a \$500 CERES voucher.

Accessibility and Inclusion at the Counihan Gallery

We are committed to accessibility and encourage applications from d/Deaf and Disabled artists. If you would like to submit a hardcopy application, a video application, or an application in an alternative format or language, please contact the Gallery at CounihanGallery@Merri-bek.vic.gov.au or on 9389 8622.

For more information about the accessibility of the Counihan Gallery venue, please visit our [Access and Inclusion at the Counihan Gallery page of our website](#).

We endeavour to meet the access requirements of all Merri-bek Summer Show exhibitors. If your application is successful, we offer resourcing to support your access requirements.

Gallery contact information	
In person	233 Sydney Road Brunswick VIC 3056 Wednesday to Saturday, 11am to 5pm Sunday 1pm to 5pm
Phone	03 9389 8622
Email	CounihanGallery@Merri-bek.vic.gov.au
Social media	Facebook: facebook.com/counihanGallery Instagram: @counihanGallery

Cover image: Installation view of *Merri-bek Summer Show 2025: Love in Crisis*.

Photographer: Wild Hardt Photography

Application Process

It is free to apply for, and exhibit in, the Merri-bek Summer Show.

As part of the application process, you must submit:

1. A completed [Application Form](#)
If you would like to submit a hardcopy or video application instead of an online form, please contact the Gallery
2. An artwork statement, which describes how your work relates to the exhibition theme (380 characters maximum). If you are accepted into the exhibition, this statement will be printed on a small label that will appear next to your work. This label will also include: your name, the artwork title and date, the medium/s, and the purchase price if your work is for sale. **Statements must not exceed 380 characters.**
3. A brief biography and/or a website or social media handles (900 characters maximum)
4. A high-resolution image of your proposed artwork, or a 1-minute excerpt of a video work. The artwork does not need to be complete at the time of submitting your application. Image files must be JPEGs; video files must be MP4.

Before submitting your application, please read the Conditions of Entry.

Important Dates

Application deadline

The application deadline is **Tuesday 22 September, 5pm.**

Submit your application online using [our Merri-bek Summer Show Application Form on SnapForms](#). SnapForms is an online survey platform.

For a Microsoft Word Document or PDF version of this form, please contact the Gallery.

Late applications will not be accepted.

Acceptance of your artwork

Applicants will receive confirmation that their entry has been accepted from **Saturday 10 October 2026.**

Delivery of artwork

If you are accepted into the exhibition, you must deliver your completed work to the Counihan Gallery **between 11am and 6pm on Wednesday 28 October or Thursday 29 October 2026.**

Exhibition dates

The Merri-bek Summer Show opens on **Wednesday 11 November** and closes on **Thursday 17 December 2026.**

Winner announcement and exhibition celebration event

Saturday 5 December 2026, 2pm

Collection of artwork

At the end of the exhibition, you are required to collect your artwork from the Counihan Gallery **between 11am and 5pm on Friday 18 December 2026, or between 11am and 5pm on Saturday 19 December.**

If you are unable to collect your work on these days, please arrange for someone to collect your work on your behalf. Works cannot be stored at the Gallery during the summer closure period.

Conditions of Entry

Please read the Conditions of Entry before submitting an application:

- ☐ You must be 18 years old or over at the time of entry.
- ☐ You must live, work, study or currently base your art practice in the Merri-bek municipality.
- ☐ You can only submit one application.
- ☐ Your artwork must be your own original work.
- ☐ Your artwork must be created or completed in 2026.
- ☐ Your artwork must explore the exhibition theme.
- ☐ **Your artwork cannot be larger than 125 cm along any axis** (including sculptures/installations).
- ☐ **Your artwork must be a single artwork.** Applications to submit a series of works, even within the size constraints, will not be accepted. A single artwork may consist of up to four panels or parts, provided it does not exceed the size constraints.
- ☐ Due to limited installation resources and equipment, **your artwork cannot include any of the following:**
 - Projections
 - Grid-style wall hangs with more than four components
 - Ceiling suspensions with more than four ceiling hanging points
 - Equipment that requires daily charging or battery replacement. A tablet or other device that can safely remain plugged in for the duration of the exhibition is acceptable.
- ☐ You must supply an adequate and tested hanging system.
- ☐ If your artwork is an installation, you must submit detailed installation instructions with your application, including images of how the artwork should look once installed.
- ☐ **You must declare any use of AI in the creation of your artwork** within the medium description. This should include a brief description of the AI tools used and how they were used in the development of the work.
- ☐ Artworks must be delivered ready to hang or install (with wires, D-rings or other fixtures already attached). Installation instructions must be included if necessary.
- ☐ You must submit your application before the deadline (see [Important Dates](#)). Late entries will not be accepted.
- ☐ You must ensure the [Application Form](#) is complete, and that all information is correct at time of submission. No changes will be made to artwork details or artist statements after the application deadline.
- ☐ If accepted into the exhibition, artworks must be delivered to the Gallery before the exhibition commences. See the [Important Dates](#) for the delivery days and times. The work delivered must be the same as the work submitted in your application.

- ❑ At the end of the exhibition, artworks must be collected from the Gallery on the dates specified by the Gallery. See [Important Dates](#) for the collection days and times. If you are unable to collect your artwork, you must organise for someone to collect the work for you. Artworks cannot be stored at the Gallery during the summer closure period.
- ❑ The Gallery takes no commission on sales from artworks in the exhibition. Sales enquiries will be directed to the artist or their nominated representative. The Gallery is not responsible for the handling of money, the coordination of artwork sales, or pick up/delivery of sold artworks.
- ❑ The artwork cannot be removed from the exhibition before the exhibition closing date.
- ❑ You must include your name on your artwork when you deliver it.
- ❑ The Gallery reserves the right to refuse display of any entry that is deemed unacceptable for exhibition. The Gallery reserves the right to remove such works at any time at its own discretion.
- ❑ You must accept full responsibility (and associated expenses) for packing, transport and insurance of your artwork.
- ❑ The Gallery will exercise reasonable care when handling and installing artworks but will not be held responsible for any loss or damage to artworks.
- ❑ Gallery staff will install and curate the exhibition at their discretion.
- ❑ The Gallery may reproduce biographical information and images of your entered artwork for print and electronic media for publicity purposes and for archival purposes in relation to the exhibition and awards.
- ❑ Employees of Merri-bek City Council who are not involved in the judging of the awards are eligible to enter the exhibition; however, they will not be eligible for awards.
- ❑ The decision reached by the judges of the awards is final and no further correspondence will be entered into.
- ❑ Lobbying or canvassing Councillors or Council Officers in relation to any exhibition applications or awards is prohibited. This includes asking Councillors or Council Officers to recommend your artwork to assessment panel members or to discuss the application with assessment panel members on your behalf. Any application submitted where the applicant, or applicant's representative, has canvassed or lobbied a Councillor or Council Officer will be deemed ineligible.

IMPORTANT DATES:	
Applications Close	Tuesday 22 September, 5pm
Acceptance Notification	From Saturday 10 October
Artwork Delivery	Wednesday 28 October, 11am–6pm Thursday 29 October, 11am–6pm
Exhibition opening date	Wednesday 11 November
Exhibition celebration event Winner announced: Noel Counihan Commemorative Art Award and Climate Activism Award	Saturday 5 December, 2pm
Exhibition closes	Thursday 17 December, 5pm

Winner announced: People's Choice Award	Friday 18 December
Artwork Collection	Friday 18 December, 11am–5pm Saturday 19 December, 11am–5pm

Privacy and Information Statement

Merri-bek City Council is committed to protecting your privacy in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic).

The personal information requested on this form is being collected by Merri-bek City Council for the 2026 Merri-bek Summer Show exhibition applications and may also be used to update your personal information otherwise held by Council (for example, contact details including email address, phone number).

The personal information may also be used by Council for related purposes (e.g. to contact you about the exhibition or use of your images). It will not be disclosed to any other external party without your consent, unless required or authorised by law. If the personal information is not provided, then your exhibition application will be deemed ineligible.

You can gain access to the personal information you have provided to Merri-bek City Council, and/or alter it, by contacting Council's Privacy Officer via telephone on 9240 1111 or e-mail at Privacyofficer@merri-bek.vic.gov.au.