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## Melbourne Art Fair Concludes Record-Breaking 19th Edition and Announces New Melbourne Art Foundation CEO

- *Over 20,000 visitors attended the Fair over four days, surpassing previous attendance records for the event*
- *Melbourne Art Fair recorded AUD\$16.4M in sales, exemplifying a strong growth trajectory for the Fair since becoming an annual event in 2024*
- *Mary Wenholz to depart Melbourne Art Foundation with former PHOTO Australia Executive Director, Clare McKenzie, joining the Foundation as CEO*

**Melbourne, 24th February 2026** - The 19th edition of Melbourne Art Fair concluded on Sunday 22nd February with record attendance and strong sales reinforcing the Fair's position as one of the most important cultural events in the region.

With AUD\$16.4M reported in sales, Melbourne Art Fair continues to build strong momentum in the market, growing sales figures each year since becoming an annual event in 2024.

**Melissa Loughnan, Fair Director, Melbourne Art Fair** said *“This year’s Fair marked a significant milestone for the local art market, delivering record sales and attendance. It was particularly encouraging to see strong engagement from both established collectors and a new generation entering Australia’s art market.”*

The debut of new collectible design salon FUTUREOBJEKT delighted visitors and offered the opportunity to view works by leading Australian designers, craftspeople and manufacturers alongside works from over 60 Australian and international galleries and Indigenous art centres.



## Notable Commissions, Grants and Acquisitions

As a not-for-profit organisation, Melbourne Art Foundation is dedicated to the support of living artists and committed to bringing artists, galleries, collectors and visitors together, building audiences and a market for contemporary art in Australia and beyond.

2026 saw Melbourne Art Foundation realise its most ambitious commissions and grants program for Melbourne Art Fair with a number of new and established initiatives including the introduction of the **Melbourne Art Foundation Art Acquisition Support Fund**. This new program is focused on facilitating the acquisition of work into institutional collections from participating galleries. Melbourne Art Foundation awarded AUD\$5,000 to **Artbank** to further enhance their existing art acquisition program and AUD\$15,000 to **Tweed Regional Gallery**, with Tweed Regional Gallery Foundation providing additional funding to make a significant number of acquisitions through the partnership.

**Ingrid Hedgcock, Director of Tweed Regional Gallery** said *"The Tweed Regional Gallery and our Foundation are thrilled to have been selected as the inaugural recipients of the Melbourne Art Foundation Art Acquisition Support Fund. It presents a significant opportunity to grow our community asset – the Tweed Regional Gallery collection in the vibrant and dynamic context of the Melbourne Art Fair. The Fund, with matched support from the Tweed Regional Gallery Foundation, has enabled the acquisition of Naabámi (thou shall/will see): Barangaroo (army of me), Miah I by Brenda L Croft from Niagara Galleries. This significant acquisition expands the Gallery's collecting profile of Australian portraiture and places MAF firmly on the radar of regional collecting institutions. We are grateful for this opportunity to expand our conversations and connections via our collection and to work with MAF"*.

In addition to the matched Support Fund the Tweed Regional Gallery Foundation was able to fund the purchase of additional works for the Tweed Regional Gallery collection by Tony Albert, Damien Shen, Rosemary Laing and Mikala Dwyer. This is made possible by the Estate of Kenneth Fizzell and Eugene McGrath through the Tweed Regional Gallery Foundation Ltd.

**Zoe Rodriguez, Director of Artbank** said *"Artbank was thrilled to partner with Melbourne Art Foundation to purchase new artwork to join the Artbank collection. This generous donation by the Melbourne Art Foundation allowed Artbank to amplify our support of practising Australian artists and the Australian arts economy".* She Continued: *"We are pleased to announce the acquisition of 'Rounds,' 2026, by Melbourne artist Aaron C. Carter from CAVES Gallery at Melbourne Art Fair 2026"* This



work will join the Artbank collection and continue to be shared with the Australian public via the art leasing program.

### Exhibitor Highlights

Amongst more than twenty galleries exhibiting in their first seven years of operation, **Nasha Gallery** presented a solo exhibition by Sydney-based artist James Little, whose practice builds narratives that trace the symptoms of moral fantasies within masculinity.

**James Stevens and Viktor Kravchenko, Directors of Nasha Gallery** said *“[it was a] Hugely successful fair. The solo presentation from James Little was received extremely well by art lovers, big collectors and our peers. We were pleasantly surprised with the amount of people through the Fair this year.”*

**Jilamara Arts Centre** marked a powerful return to the Fair this year, presenting Barbara Puruntatameri’s first solo exhibition to an enthusiastic and receptive audience.

**Jo McCormack, Art Engagement Coordinator, Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association** said *“Jilamara Arts returned to the Melbourne Art Fair this year through the William Mora Indigenous Art Centre Program, following a successful presentation in 2022 by Johnathon World Peace Bush. We were proud to present Barbara Puruntatameri’s inaugural solo body of work, which resonated deeply with audiences throughout the Fair.”*

*Pangilajimo Barbara Puruntatameri lives in a remote Tiwi community and works out of a 100% Tiwi-owned and governed art centre. It was incredibly meaningful for her to have the opportunity to attend the art fair, share her work on this platform and to experience such a positive response from collectors and the broader arts community.”*

**Volker Haug Studio** unveiled Pilz, a one-of-a-kind series of mouth-blown Murano glass lamps produced in Venice. Drawing on a 4,000-year-old glassmaking tradition, the collection celebrates the artistry of murrine. Defined by a soft, mushroom-like silhouette, each lamp is individually blown in Murano, featuring a layered interplay of classic and contemporary patterns that ensures no two pieces are alike.

**Volker Haug, Director of Volker Haug Studio** said *“We felt incredibly privileged to have been asked to showcase at FUTUREOBJEKT as part of our first Melbourne Art Fair. There is something truly special about connecting with people in person, meeting both new and existing clients, and seeing how they engage with our lights. It also gave*



*us the opportunity to present a collection that pushed us as a studio to explore new and experimental techniques with our trusted collaborators. We had such a wonderful experience at the Melbourne Art Fair.”*

Established in 2019, **Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert** has built a reputation for presenting artists and designers who push boundaries and challenge perceptions. At Melbourne Art Fair 2026, the gallery presented a solo exhibition by Rive Roshan.

**Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Director of Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert** said *“We were thrilled to return to Melbourne Art Fair this year to present a solo exhibition of fine art and design by international artists Rive Roshan, a presentation that felt perfectly at home within the renewed atmosphere of the fair. For us, bringing international artists to the fair is central to giving visitors the opportunity to discover and explore new work, enriching the experience for everyone.*

*The fair itself felt like a genuine step forward. From the moment you walked through the doors, the arrival experience was exciting and fresh, immediately setting the tone for what was to come. The new fair layout deserves particular recognition, with the thoughtful flow creating a sense of momentum that carried visitors naturally through the fair and made the overall experience feel cohesive and engaging.”*

For its first major art fair presentation, **Mary Cherry Contemporary** delivered a confident solo booth dedicated to Ruth O’Leary, marking a significant step for the gallery’s evolving program. Known for championing conceptually driven contemporary practices, the gallery brought a clear curatorial focus to the fair, positioning O’Leary’s work at the forefront of its vision.

**Helen Newton-Brown, Director of Mary Cherry Contemporary** said *“Our solo booth at Melbourne Art Fair marked Mary Cherry's first major fair. The atmosphere was relaxed and warm and we had many genuinely interesting conversations. Ruth O'Leary's work resonated strongly and the collector response was overwhelming! We came away with so many new relationships that feel genuinely significant. It was an important moment for the gallery and for Ruth's practice - and honestly, a lot of fun.”*

**Justin Miller Art**, the Sydney-based gallery known for its expertise in significant secondary market works, brought a tightly curated presentation to the 2026 Melbourne Art Fair. With a focus on major figures in Australian art history, the gallery presented works by Brett Whiteley and Sidney Nolan, reflecting its longstanding commitment to museum-quality exhibitions and scholarly rigour.



**Justin Miller, Director of Justin Miller Art** said *“A little like Goldilocks and those three friendly bears, MAF to me seemed not too big, not too small, but just about right. We loved showcasing 20th century masters alongside fantastic contemporary art and design. The whole event was beautifully orchestrated with a steady pace of collectors and art lovers streaming through.”*

New Zealand-based gallery, **Grace**, spotlighted two rising voices from Aotearoa, Christian Dimick and Joshua Taylor (Ford’s Factory). Framing their practices in dialogue, the gallery brought together a new body of Dimick’s paintings with Taylor’s sculptural lighting, reflecting Grace’s commitment to ambitious, cross-disciplinary presentations that challenge the conventions of the art fair format.

**Emil Scheffmann, Director, Grace**, said *“I loved the chance to join the Melbourne Art Scene for a week. FUTUREOBJEKT felt like a truly innovative moment. As a gallerist, I love it and felt uplifted by the energy and expanded audience that it brought. The care and hospitality we received from MAF was extraordinary. For a little gallery at the beginning of their journey, Melissa and the MAF made it all feel possible.”*

**Martin Browne Contemporary** presented a curated pairing of Jessica Murtagh and Alexander McKenzie, bringing together glass sculpture and painting in a shared meditation on gardens, florals and plant life. Murtagh’s botanical glass forms were shown in dialogue with McKenzie’s atmospheric landscapes, drawing on classical garden motifs to create a quiet, immersive encounter with nature.

**Tom Jamieson, Sales Director, Martin Browne Contemporary** said *“The energy at Melbourne Art Fair 2026 was fantastic. There was a sense of engagement throughout the week. We had some strong wins but what was most rewarding was the genuine response to our booth. The works by Alexander McKenzie and Jessica Murtagh resonated with collectors. It was encouraging to see such thoughtful conversations unfold around the work and to feel that level of connection in the space.”*

#### Melbourne Art Foundation Introduces Clare McKenzie as Incoming CEO

Melbourne Art Foundation also announces the departure of CEO Mary Wenzholz and appointment of former PHOTO Australia Executive Director, Clare McKenzie as incoming CEO.



Mary joined Melbourne Art Foundation in 2022 as Director of Events and Operations before taking on the position of CEO ahead of the 2025 edition of Melbourne Art Fair. In her role as CEO, Mary has spearheaded the evolution of the Melbourne Art Fair's generous grants program including the introduction of the Melbourne Art Foundation Art Acquisition Support Fund which was established in 2026 to facilitate acquisitions of work into institutional collections from participating galleries at Melbourne Art Fair.

**Mary Wenholz, outgoing CEO, Melbourne Art Foundation** said *“Leading Melbourne Art Foundation, an organisation whose legacy has been critical to the commercial gallery sector, has offered a rare opportunity to directly contribute to the future of the sector. The 2026 edition of Melbourne Art Fair reflects this growth, expanding in ambition, scale and national relevance while remaining grounded in its core purpose of supporting artists, galleries and the broader cultural ecosystem. I’m immensely proud of what the team, board, galleries, and partners have built together.”* She adds, *“As I step aside following the 2026 Fair, I’m excited about the Foundation’s next phase under Clare’s leadership. Clare brings a deep commitment to the sector and a clear focus on strengthening opportunities for galleries and artists, and I have every confidence she will build on this strong foundation while leading Melbourne Art Foundation into its next chapter with energy and purpose”.*

An experienced arts manager, Clare joins Melbourne Art Foundation after almost seven years leading PHOTO Australia and previous experience as General Manager of Ausdance Victoria. Her expertise spans delivery of high-impact events and festivals as well as local and international market development across both the visual and performing arts sectors, making her a perfect fit to step in and lead Melbourne Art Foundation into this new chapter.

**Peter Jopling AM KC, Chairman of Melbourne Art Foundation** said *“We are incredibly grateful for the dedication and leadership Mary Wenholz has shown during her tenure as CEO, helping deliver our most successful Melbourne Art Fair to date, both in sales and attendance. We are equally delighted to welcome Clare McKenzie as the next CEO, as the Foundation continues to grow and showcase the extraordinary depth of Australia’s homegrown creative talent.”*

*“I am thrilled to be taking on this role at such an exciting time for the Foundation,”* says **Clare McKenzie, incoming CEO, Melbourne Art Foundation.** *“The 2026 edition of Melbourne Art Fair set a remarkable benchmark, thanks to the leadership of Mary Wenholz and the dedication of the team, and that energy is a real source of inspiration as we turn our attention to 2027.”* She adds, *“I look forward to working with the team to*



*build on this momentum, continuing our mission to build new audiences and a market for contemporary art in Australia and beyond”.*

## NOTES TO EDITOR

### Melbourne Art Fair 2026 Galleries

Galleries presenting at Melbourne Art Fair in 2026 include: **1301SW/STARKWHITE** (Naarm/Melbourne, Gadigal Country/Sydney, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland), **Alcaston Gallery** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Ames Yavuz** (Gadigal Country/Sydney, Singapore), **Art Collective WA** (Boorloo/Perth), **Arts Projects Australia** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Australian Tapestry Workshop** (Naarm/Melbourne), **CAVES** (Naarm/Melbourne), **cbOne** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Charles Nodrum Gallery** (Naarm/Melbourne), **D’Lan GALLERIES** (Naarm/Melbourne, Gadigal Country/Sydney, Lenapehoking/New York), **Daine Singer** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Egg & Dart** (Dharawal Country/Wollongong), **Fine Arts, Sydney** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Fox Jensen & Fox Jensen McCrory** (Gadigal Country/Sydney, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland), **Galerie Christian Lethert** (Cologne), **Gertrude** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Jan Murphy Gallery** (Meanjin/Brisbane), **Justin Miller Art** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **MARS Gallery** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Martin Browne Contemporary** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Michael Reid Sydney + Berlin** (Gadigal Country/Sydney, Berlin), **MOORE CONTEMPORARY** (Boorloo/Perth), **NandaHobbs** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Neon Parc** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Niagara Galleries** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Nicholas Thompson Gallery** (Naarm/Melbourne), **PIERMARQ\*** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Rebecca Hossack Art Gallery** (London), **REDBASE ART** (Naarm/Melbourne, Gadigal Country/Sydney, Yogyakarta, Indonesia), **Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Sophie Gannon Gallery** (Naarm/Melbourne), **S\_y\_d\_n\_e\_y\_S\_y\_d\_n\_e\_y\_** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **STATION** (Naarm/Melbourne, Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Sullivan+Strumpf** (Naarm/Melbourne, Gadigal Country/Sydney, Singapore), **Tido Art** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Tolarno Galleries** (Naarm/Melbourne), **William Mora Galleries** (Naarm/Melbourne).

Committed to creating a platform that supports the next generation of artistic practice, Melbourne Art Foundation provides subsidised spaces for young galleries established after 2018: **Animal House Fine Arts** (Naarm/Melbourne), **APY Art Centre Collective** (Naarm/Melbourne, Gadigal Country /Sydney, Tarntanya/Adelaide), **AVA (Boorloo/Perth)**, **Cassandra Bird** (Gadigal Country/Sydney, Paris), **day01.**(Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Emilia Galatis Projects** (Whadjuk boodjar/Perth), **Five Walls** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Foënder Galleries** (Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland), **Gallery Sally Dan-Cuthbert** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Grace** (Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland), **Haydens** (Naarm/Melbourne), **LAILA** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **LON Gallery** (Naarm/Melbourne), **MAGMA Galleries** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Mary Cherry Contemporary** (Naarm/Melbourne), **N.Smith Gallery** (Gadigal Country/Sydney),



**Nasha Gallery** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **PALAS** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Sumer** (Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland), **The Little Machine** (Tarntanya/Adelaide), **The Renshaws'** (Meanjin/Brisbane), **Void\_Melbourne** (Naarm/Melbourne).

Supported through the William Mora Indigenous Art Centre program the 2026 Fair will host six Indigenous arts centres: **MOA Arts** (Mua, Mualgal Country/Moa Island), **Munupi Arts & Crafts Association** (Pirlangimpi Community, Melville Island), **Papunya Tjupi Arts** (Papunya), **Jilamara Arts** (Milikapiti Community, Melville Island), **Ikuntji Artists** (Haasts Bluff, Ikuntji), and **Walkatjara Art** (Mutitjulu community, Uluru). The Program is funded by the Australian Government through the **Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (IVAIS)** program and generously supported by **Morgans Financial Limited**.

### **FUTUREOBJEKT Exhibitors**

**Adam Cornish** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Alta Forma** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Agency Projects** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Agglomerati** (London), **Adam Goodrum** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Beci Orpin & Dustin Fritsche** (Naarm/Melbourne), **CHRISTOPHER BOOTS** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Cordon Salon, Rosanna Ceravolo, Jordan Flemming & Marta Figueiredo** (Naarm/Melbourne), **CRAFT Victoria** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Dalton Stewart & Annie Paxton** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Don Cameron** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Mobilia as TWENTY TWENTY** (Naarm/Melbourne, Gadigal Country/Sydney, Boorloo/Perth), **OIGÁLL PROJECTS** (Naarm/Melbourne), **OKO OLO & Charlie White** (Gadigal Country/Sydney, Naarm/Melbourne), **Sozou Studio** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Studio GARDNER** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **TOMFEREDAY** (Gadigal Country/Sydney), **Volker Haug Studio** (Naarm/Melbourne), **Zachary Frankel** (Naarm/Melbourne).

**Melbourne Art Fair** is owned and produced by the **Melbourne Art Foundation**, a systemically significant non-profit Australian arts organisation that leads the way in building audiences and markets for the work of Australia's living artists. Melbourne Art Fair has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and Creative Victoria.

### **ABOUT MELBOURNE ART FAIR**

For four days each February, Melbourne Art Fair transforms the city into a meeting place for the curious and the devoted. Leading galleries and Indigenous-owned art centres converge with collectors, artists, and those simply drawn to the hum of new ideas. The air is thick with conversation, drinks are poured, stories are traded, and somewhere in the crowd, someone falls in love with an idea that will follow them home.



For more than thirty-eight years, Melbourne Art Fair has been a defining fixture on the Australasian cultural calendar, supporting and promoting living artists through the staging of a world-class contemporary art fair. It is a place to wander, to pause, to talk and to see the world, briefly, through someone else's eyes. Presenting works from the region's most respected artists and galleries, and their newest, most exciting counterparts, the Fair stimulates critical and commercial attention, ensuring that the conversations that begin here continue to resonate long after the lights go out.

This is art.

This is Melbourne.

[www.melbourneartfair.com.au](http://www.melbourneartfair.com.au)

### **ABOUT MELBOURNE ART FOUNDATION**

Melbourne Art Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2003 to promote and support contemporary art and living artists. Committed to bringing artists, galleries, collectors, and the art loving public together, the Foundation leads the way in building audiences and a market for Australia's living artists. It weaves together commercial, social, cultural, and environmental threads to support the rich cultural tapestry of the Australian visual arts community. The Foundation sponsors a range of programs anchoring Melbourne Art Fair as a cultural benchmark including commissions, special projects, exhibitions, conversations, and performances.

[www.melbourneartfoundation.com](http://www.melbourneartfoundation.com)

**Further information on Melbourne Art Fair 2026 can be found in past press announcements:**

[New Wave Galleries Make Their Melbourne Art Fair Debut in 2026](#)

[Melbourne Art Fair Announces FUTUREOBJEKT Exhibitors and Inaugural Design Commission in Partnership with National Gallery of Victoria](#)

[Melbourne Art Fair unveils exhibition highlights and CONVERSATIONS program for february 2026](#)

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