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- [How Do I Use It?](#)
- [Find a Gallery](#)
- [Info for Galleries](#)
- [FAQs](#)
- [News](#)
- [Apply Now](#)
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8 August 2016

## Your Guide to Melbourne Art Week

With a heady program of art-related events taking place from 16-21 August, there's a lot to see and do at Melbourne Art Week. To help you get a jump start, art advisor Catherine Asquith has put together a guide to the who's who and what's what of the Melbourne art fairs.



*Image: Louise Paramor, Jam Session #6, 2016, found plastics, 30 x 30 x 60cm, Courtesy: the artist and Karen Woodbury Gallery. Showing @ SPRING 1883*

Exactly two decades ago I bought my first artwork, from an art fair held in Melbourne: the Australian Contemporary Art Fair or ACAF (later to become the Melbourne Art Fair). This was its fifth edition, and my visit was a very tentative initiation into the art world. Were it not for the clearly good cheer of the gallerist at the time when I asked for – shock horror – lay-by, I may well have never bought the work. Indeed, I may not have ventured back into the gallery circuit until much later, when I had a far healthier bank balance and greater self-assurance. Yet for this novice at the time, it was on reflection the palpable upbeat and celebratory atmosphere of this environment which has proven the more seductive memory. I treasured the catalogue from that fair, carefully turning the pages over the coming months, and committing to memory the many artworks I had seen, as I awaited the arrival of my first acquisition.

For the uninitiated, the art fair model may be viewed as a type of user-friendly adjunct to the more formal gallery infrastructure, perhaps yielding to the public sensibility of ‘looking’ or ‘browsing’. Less obvious maybe is the aspect of ‘audience participation’ at these types of events; one’s attendance actually constitutes a conscious decision to engage with the visual arts. It’s certainly a step in the right direction to unravelling the sometimes complex and challenging nuances of the contemporary art scene.

In what can only be described as an extremely positive manifestation of ‘community spirit’, some

enterprising individuals and collectives from the Melbourne visual arts sector have initiated and will be hosting a virtual plethora of art and art-related events in the third week of August this year, a scheduled week formerly reserved for *the* art event in this fair city, the Melbourne Art Fair. Satellite fairs, art events and artist talks, forums and panel discussions, a street party, an “arts-speed-dating” event (brilliant!), curated exhibitions and yes, even an arts-related “progressive tasting degustation”, will be happening. What’s not to like?

### [602 Melbourne](#)

17 - 21 August 2016

602 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne

Described as “a spontaneous, creative, joyous coming together for friendly art galleries wanting to share with the public the best of what they do in a new and exciting setting”, 602 will bring together 9 commercial art galleries, both Melbourne and Sydney-based, showcasing the work of approximately 40 contemporary artists.

The usual parameters of a gallery’s participation in an art fair will be left by the wayside, allowing for a new freedom on what the galleries choose to exhibit, even accommodating a re-hang midway through the event. Harnessing a Berliner’s approach to creative collaborations, 602 will be housed in a re-purposed electricity substation located at the western end of the CBD. All very *neu* or *frisch* (German for fresh, new, crisp, cool).

With the support of the City of Melbourne, Art Money, Work Club and Art Month, 602 promises an innovative take on collaboration, and an invigorating urban experience for art lovers.

**Art Money will be running an insiders tour of 602 Melbourne with artist Scott Gardiner on Friday 19 August, 6pm. To join, [rsvp@10group.com.au](mailto:rsvp@10group.com.au)**

### [FLAIR](#)

18 - 21 August 2016

Top end of Flinders Lane, Melbourne

A similar type of collegiality underscores FLAIR Melbourne. According to Donald Williams, Director of Global Art Projects (GAP), this new event “all happened very quickly” but nevertheless with a great deal of dexterity. The ensuing dialogue amongst the art affiliates at the top end of Flinders Lane on how best to ‘fill the gap’ allowed a revised focus on marketing the arts. As Jane Scott, Director of Craft notes, “it’s nice to collaborate with one’s colleagues”, and such opportunities are quite rare. FLAIR Melbourne is an amalgam of artists, gallerists, restaurateurs and musicians, and has been curated by ARC ONE Gallery, Arts Project Australia (supported by NKN Gallery), Craft, fortyfivedownstairs and Sofitel Melbourne on Collins.

The program includes a range of talks, forums and panel discussions with creatives, alongside curated exhibitions and an opportunity for audience participation in an immersive exhibition involving the *camera obscura* technique. There is also a progressive tasting degustation at which guests might be dining from artisan ceramics whilst jazz musicians respond to an exhibition. It is an ambitious and highly inventive program, and indeed, will make for very much the “festival” experience.

### [SPRING 1883](#)

17 - 21 August 2016

## 111 Spring Street, Melbourne

This theme of *revision* of the arts scene was part of the impetus behind SPRING 1883, a hotel-based art fair that draws on the traditions of the Gramercy Park Fair of New York.

Now in its third iteration, SPRING 1883 has always sought to provide an alternative to the traditional art fair, utilising a boutique site and allowing for a more intimate engagement between artist, collector and gallerist. Fundamental to this initiative has been an appreciation by its participants of “shared conceptual engagements”. Exhibitors for this year number 27, and comprise mostly Australian galleries, in addition to several from New Zealand, and 3 international galleries (Grey Noise of Dubai, Southard Reid of London and KANSAS of New York) due to cross the equator.

### NotFair

16 - 21 August 2016

524 Flinders Street, Melbourne

Seeking out new opportunities for unrepresented and/or independent artists was at the forefront for 3 ‘disruptors’ – artists Tony Lloyd and Sam Leach, and arts writer Ashley Crawford – back in 2010. NotFair was conceived as an alternative satellite event to what they believed was the “gallery-centric Melbourne Art Fair”. At its heart was a curated exhibition of emerging, unrepresented and independent artists whose work would not normally be entitled to be exhibited within the more traditional fair model.

Now under the careful stewardship of Gina Lee, this ‘outsider’ art fair has matured into an established event, and notwithstanding its initial parameters, has seen its business model adopt a more formal demeanour albeit still retaining its edge. Incorporating a no doubt unruly street party on opening night, NotFair Art Fair will also include 3 different types of art tours to the other fairs and events in its immediate vicinity; a “three-way speed dating” event (sounds a bit risqué) for artists, writers and curators; and an exhibition program entitled *Sign O’ The Times* curated by Kirsten Rann.

So...get your walking shoes on, grab an umbrella, dress in layers (this is Melbourne), join the community, and challenge your senses. A veritable visual feast awaits you.

*About the author: Catherine Asquith is a former gallerist, now art advisor, based in Melbourne.*

*A version of this article was first published on [ArtsHub](#), Monday 25 July 2016.*

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**Thinking about buying art at Melbourne Art Week? Art Money interest free loans will be available to purchase art at 602, SPRING 1883, NotFair and FLAIR. You can sign up for Art Money on the spot at the Fairs, but we suggest [applying](#) beforehand so you’re all ready to go when you find a work you can’t live without. Art Money staff will be in Melbourne throughout the week to walk you through the application process and answer any questions you might have.**

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