



Collecting art with heart

Starting your own trove of artistic treasures can be daunting, but these galleries are making art accessible.

Collaboration: Artist Hannah Nowlan is set to launch the artist-centred Lander-Se gallery in Red Hill, Victoria.

SUZI APPEL

Art can make a home, especially original pieces with stories to tell. But even for the most avid art-lover, starting or adding to a collection can come with accessibility and affordability woes. Until now.

A new type of contemporary art market has emerged over the past couple of years – one that grants easy access to the artworks, whether by reducing costs or breaking down the barriers between artist and buyer. Here are some galleries enabling ownership and supporting artists at a grassroots level.

The landscape and art are interwoven at artist Hannah Nowlan's Lander-Se gallery in Red Hill on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula. The space sits in a barn on a hectare of land, and Nowlan aims for it to become an art retreat akin to the Heide Museum of Modern Art or TarraWarra Museum of Art – “where artists and visitors can seek repose from everyday life and return inspired”.

The gallery will launch later this year with an exhibition by Nowlan, followed by a group exhibition by local Mornington Peninsula artists in summer. Its purpose is to be artist-centred – allowing them to carve out individual and financially sustainable long-term careers without feeling tied down or controlled.

“Being an independent, artist-run space [and non-commercial setting] allows us to be explorative and supportive of fellow artists as collaborators,” Nowlan explains. “We are modelling an alternate gallery structure to better support artists and our environment.”

Telling stories

Western Australia's Spinifex Hill Studio connects art to culture and Country with a narrative unique to the maker.

In 2008, South Hedland-based artists Irene Coffin and Max George wanted to give the town's First Nations artists opportunities for professional development. Along with members of Mothers Against Drugs and not-for-profit organisation FORM, they began running workshops, and by 2014, they had launched a purpose-built studio for the artists to create in.

Artworks rich in storytelling, colour, and expressive form were produced, and in 2021, Spinifex Hill Project Space opened for the community and visitors.

“Our cohort is a diverse group of different language and cultural groups, reflecting the broader First Nations demographic in Hedland,” says studio manager Bianca Acimovic.

“Many of our artists have been painting with us for over 10 years. However, our contracts are non-exclusive, and artists are free to come and go as they please. There is nowhere else in Hedland for artists to tell their stories through painting, engage in cultural maintenance activities, and earn an income simultaneously.”

For those not able to travel to Western Australia, the studio releases work through its online store.

In the cities, art is more readily available in physical spaces such as China Heights Gallery in Sydney’s Surry Hills, which has supported emerging artists for almost 20 years.

“A significant part of our approach centred on building a working community of peers ... which existed



COURTESY OF SPINIFEX HILL STUDIOS

Clockwise from above: Katie Nalgood, *Untitled* (2021), acrylic on canvas; Ondine Seabrook on show at China Heights; Aster + Asha gallerist Bayoush Demissie with Inbal Nissim artworks; Nyanjlpayi Chapman, *Untitled* (2021), acrylic on canvas; Rachael Rose ceramics at China Heights.

outside the pre-existing gallery and institutional structure in Sydney,” says director Nina Treffkorn.

This ideology still stands today, with the gallery representing artists alongside a stable of fashion designers, public activations, musicians, design and community engagement.

Making connections

In Brisbane, Aster + Asha Gallery established a framework to connect emerging artists with collectors.

Experienced gallery manager Bayoush Demissie launched Aster + Asha online in 2021 and says she believes buying art should be fun and accessible.

“It can sometimes be daunting to know where to start when purchasing artwork, and creating an online art platform felt like the best way to showcase the talented artists currently out there,” Demissie says.

She says the gallery is committed to providing a unique perspective on artists creating work and promoting art with strong aesthetics and concepts, whether they are making paintings, sculptures, photographs, or textiles.

“Sometimes it’s bold use of colour, a nuanced approach to materials or pursuing ideas that resonate in our community,” she says.

“We recognise that artworks can often be a conversation starting point and something you grow with.”

Other places for seeking affordable emerging art include HAKE House of

COURTESY OF CHINA HEIGHTS



Galleries

Lander-Se

landerse.au | @landerse.au

Spinifex Hill Studio

spinifexhillstudio.com.au
@spinifexhillartists

China Heights

chinaheights.com
@chinaheights

Aster + Asha Gallery

asterashagallery.com.au
@asterandasha_gallery

Sunday Salon

sundaysalon.com.au
@sunday.salon

HAKE House of Art

hake.house | @hake.house



COURTESY OF CHINA HEIGHTS

“A destination where artists and visitors can seek repose from everyday life and return inspired.” Hannah Nowlan



COURTESY OF SPINIFEX HILL STUDIOS



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Art on Sydney’s Northern Beaches (with a bricks-and-mortar gallery as well as ample offering online) and Sunday Salon in Melbourne’s Northcote, which has online programming, including bimonthly drops plus an in-person viewing space at Coco Flip.

Interestingly, both galleries blend interiors and art, elevating everyday art and allowing design to be appreciated beyond more than an ephemeral glance.

Simple advice for buying art both online and from emerging galleries is to believe in the artwork and artist.

Building trust with a gallery can ensure this connection – but so can taking a chance.

You should take the time to do your research – many artists showcase their work on social media platforms, particularly Instagram. And, of course, it’s always nice to buy local and support your arts community. ■