

Next Wave,

Next Wave,

Wominjeka,
We're here!

2026 Program

A world shaped by artists

For over 40-years, Next Wave has been the incubator for Australia's most ambitious and boundary-pushing young and emerging artists. Since its beginnings as a biennial festival in 1984, Next Wave has continually reshaped itself in response to shifting artistic needs and the evolving worlds in which new work emerges.

Our 2026 artistic program revitalises Next Wave's commitment to emerging and early-career artists with a creative developments, exhibitions, public programs, performances, residencies, partnerships, and more. Marking 25 years of Kickstart, we revive this landmark creative development program alongside new ventures that prioritise experimentation, peer learning and deep community connection.

From our home at Brunswick Mechanics Institute, we offer artists space to forge ambitious projects at pivotal moments in their practice. Through an ever-shifting constellation of artistic and public programs, performances, events, creative developments, residencies, and partnerships, Next Wave becomes a year-round site for testing, gathering and sharing new possibilities.

Guided by a curatorial framework attuned to future thinking, Next Wave supports the next generation of artists and arts leaders to imagine, and begin shaping, the art worlds to come.



Ellamay Khongroj Fitzgerald, *A Seat At The Table*, 2025, Next Wave, Narrm/Melbourne. Courtesy the Artist.
Photo: Mae Hartrick.

Core Programs

Kickstart

Creative Development & Presentation

In 2026–27, Next Wave’s flagship Kickstart program will focus on nurturing early-career artists from across Victoria, offering deep, sustained support to develop and present bold new work. This reimagined iteration shifts from a national model to a locally focused program, centring Victorian-based and locally responsive practices, and revitalising the festival spirit within our year-round activities.

An open call will invite artists to pitch an original work for development and presentation in September 2027—offering a significant opportunity to showcase their practice to audiences, industry, and local communities. Works will be selected with support from our Arts Advisory (see page 8–9), ensuring diverse perspectives and practices are championed.

EOIs in early 2026



Georgia Lucy, *Gough & Margaret's Bull Clip*, Kickstart, 2025, Next Wave, Narrm/Melbourne. Courtesy the Artist. Photo: Mae Hartrick

Soft Infrastructures

Social Practice and Community Engagement Commission

Soft Infrastructures is an annual commission dedicated to social practice and community-led methodologies, supporting an early-career Victorian artist to create a career-defining work that reflects the evolving role of art in public life.

The selected artist will receive curatorial mentorship and support to undertake an ambitious research-led commission that sits across art, education, and social engagement.

Late 2026

Swell

Emerging Curator + Graduate Showcase

Swell is a new initiative supporting emerging curators/producers to create collaborative presentations showcasing the work of recent graduates from art schools, universities, and technical institutions across Naarm and greater Melbourne. Taking its name from the metaphor of a rising force – a gathering wave of creative energy – Swell recognises the momentum, potential, and impact of emerging voices in Australian arts and culture.

The program also bridges the gap between study and professional practice, supporting access-driven, collaborative exhibition-making by the next generations of artists and creative practitioners.

Late 2026

More information about our core programs will be available soon – [sign up to our newsletter to stay in the loop](#)



MaggZ, *(nexus) launch*, 2024, A Rising Tide, Narrm/Melbourne. Courtesy the Artist Photo: Nam Chops

Next Wave Arts Advisory

Next Wave's Arts Advisory is a new initiative ensuring artists' voices are central to shaping our programs. This group of practicing artists and arts workers will come together in 2026 to guide the development of our program and help ensure Next Wave stays responsive, inclusive and relevant.



Photo: Tessa C. Stevens

Zoë Bastin

Zoë Bastin is an Australian choreographer, performer, researcher, and educator whose interdisciplinary practice sits at the intersection of contemporary dance, visual art, and critical theory. Their work examines how bodies are shaped by and resist systems of power through queer and feminist methodologies. Zoë completed a PhD at RMIT University in 2021 on the philosophy of the body and currently lectures and supervises research projects at RMIT, VCA, and Deakin University.



Photo: Abdela Igmirien

陳雋然 Chun Yin Rainbow Chan

Rainbow Chan is an award-winning vocalist, producer and multi-disciplinary artist. Her practice bridges popular music and contemporary visual arts, exploring themes of cultural representation, (mis)translation, matrilineal histories and diasporic heritage. Central to her work is the research and reimagining of women's oral traditions, particularly the fading bridal laments of Weitou women, Hong Kong's first settlers, to whom she has deep ancestral ties.



Photo: Courtesy the artist

Axel Garay

Axel Garay is a proud Meriam (Eastern Torres Strait), Puerto Rican & Malaysian queer man living and working on the lands of the Kulin Nations in Narrm (Melbourne) Australia. Axel is an emerging interdisciplinary artist using digital video, installation and alternative photographic processes to explore themes of technology ethics, desire, spirituality, history and human psychology.



Photo: Courtesy the artist.

Matisse Laida

Matisse Laida is a Queer Mauritian/Venezuelan artist and community arts worker whose practice spans film, food, performance, and public programs. Their work centres care, culture, and collaboration through a queer diasporic lens. They are the founder of We Eatin' Good, a QPOC project using food to gather community and explore identity, and have worked across festivals, arts organisations, and youth programs to create spaces for marginalised artists to be seen and supported.



Photo: Wild Hardt

Varsha Ramesh

Varsha Ramesh is a producer from Chennai, India now based in Narrm/Melbourne working across experimental and contemporary practice. She has worked across arts organisations, festivals, and ARIs, shaping projects with an ethic of care, curiosity, and creative rigour. All her work is guided by a deep commitment to equity and justice. Currently, she's a Creative Producer at Arts House and Board Member at Runway Journal.



Photo: Abdul Halik Azeez

Aziz Sohail

Aziz Sohail is a Pakistan-passport holding curator and writer whose work builds interdisciplinary connections between art, history, archives, literature, theory, and biography and supports new cultural and pedagogical infrastructures. Their research and resultant projects honour and recognise the power of queer and feminist collectivity, sociability, joy, and wayward encounter and unfold through slowness, collaboration, and tentacularity.

Coming up at Next Wave

Presentation / Theatre / Children /

UNDERARTS Summer Workshop Finale

See an original theatre piece devised and performed by UNDERARTS' 8–16 year old summer workshop participants – inspired by the worlds of Studio Ghibli.

The piece will be developed over four creative and collaborative days lead by Allison Wiltshire and Ahmarnya Price, two artists and facilitators with a shared passion for helping young people tell stories, take creative risks and make something entirely their own.

Learn more about the program at underarts.com.au

23 January, Free – but please RSVP

Theatre /

Robert the Octopus presented by Midsumma Festival

A queer surreal farce about looking for love. And an octopus.

Sadie has a crush on her co-worker Georgia. But they only ever see each other online. In a desperate attempt to capture Georgia's attention, Sadie buys a pet octopus.

Starring Lily Fish, Michelle McCowage, Hallie Goodman.

Directed by Kimberley Twiner (PO PO MO CO).

Written by Malthouse Playwright in Development Alex Duncan.

"Intricately crafted physical comedy" – *The Age*

29 January – 7 February, tickets from \$30

This performance is supported by Next Wave, Midsumma Festival and Merri-Bek City Council



Robert the Octopus, 2025. Courtesy the Artist. Photo: Hannah Spence.

Coexistence, Jesse Vivante and Alexander Meagher

Coexistence is an intersection of sound, body, and space.

Percussion and sound experimentalists Jesse Vivante and Alexander Meagher journey through emotion, presenting motifs, rhythms, and histories of thought shaped by memory, sensation, and time. Sound becomes movement. Movement becomes friction. Two streams of consciousness unfolding in parallel, sometimes converging, sometimes resisting, sometimes dissolving into one another.

The work traces the inner and outer terrains of internal emotion, endurance, discovery, rupture, and repair originally inspired by their individual works *Omni-Omni* and *A Brilliant Seagull*. As the performers encounter one another, boundaries blur and identities are reflected, challenged, fractured, and re-formed. Presence becomes negotiation. Listening becomes an act of exposure. What happens when two worlds occupy the same moment? What is understood? What is lost? What remains unresolved?

Alexander Meagher is a versatile and dynamic percussionist from Melbourne/Naarm who enjoys the multifaceted nature of percussion and enjoys learning about music genres and instruments from throughout history and from around the world. He is passionate about narrative-focused, energetic, and transportive performances and has performed with orchestras, music theatre, and festivals both nationally and internationally.

Jesse Vivante is a percussionist, sound designer, and performer originally hailing from Boorloo (Perth). His work explores new approaches to artistic practice through the interplay between contemporary percussion, installation, and movement, where sound and gesture act as mutual catalysts to perpetuate one another. By shifting percussion beyond its sonic function and into choreographic space, and by treating movement as a generative sonic force, he looks to cultivate a hybrid form of work that unifies the boundaries between movement and sound.

12 – 14 February, tickets from \$20

In partnership with Speak Percussion



TOP: Jesse Vivante, *Omni Omni*, 2024. BOTTOM: Alexander Meagher, *A Brilliant Seagull*, 2024.
Courtesy the artists. Photos: Darren Gill.

compost : compose, Rasha Tayeh

This performance forms part of Blindside's Emerging Curator Program, a professional development opportunity for an emerging curator to increase their logistical, technical and conceptual skills, while building their professional creative networks.

Recipient Rasha Tayeh presents *compost : compose*, featuring a performance and public program, across various ecologies and geographies. Taking inspiration from the soil, Rasha invites artists to make meaning of how we can compost old structures, let go, tend to grief, and decompose old ways of thinking, doing and being to find ways to compose new imaginaries for reparative futures and collective liberation.

Participating Artists: Allara, Yusuke Akai, Mohamed Chamas

Public Program: Mwaffaq Alhajjar, Sarah Iman, DT, and participating artists

Rasha Tayeh is a transdisciplinary artist, writer, curator, researcher, herbalist, and founding director of Beit e'Shai Teahouse. Her practice is land-based, focusing on telling stories about people's relationships in community and ecology. With over 20 years experience as an exhibiting artist in Australia and abroad, and through her pop-up teahouse since 2017, Rasha has curated and hosted a range of art exhibitions, workshops, community events, live gigs and listening sessions, tea ceremonies, and poetry nights.

Performance: 18 February, tickets from \$10

Public program: 21 February, Free

In partnership with Blindside



Rasha Tayeh, Olive Leaves cyanotype, 2025. Courtesy the artist.

Festival / Community /

Brunswick Music Festival

We're teaming up with Brunswick Music Festival in 2026 to present performances and special events at Brunswick Mechanics Institute. This includes during Sydney Road Street Party! The program will be confirmed soon – watch this space.

1 – 8 March, Free

In partnership with Merri-bek City Council

Screenings /

Civic Cinema

Civic Cinema is a new monthly screening series presented by Composite and Next Wave at the Brunswick Mechanics Institute. Drawing on the building's history as a civic hall and site of public learning, the program brings together contemporary moving image, experimental film, documentary, and historical works from Australia and overseas. Each screening creates space for shared viewing, conversation, and reflection, connecting audiences with artists and filmmakers who expand the possibilities of cinema today. Civic Cinema foregrounds the breadth of moving-image culture, from artist films and archival rediscoveries to new works that blur the boundaries between cinema, visual art, and documentary practice. Across the year, the series invites viewers to engage with bold ideas, diverse perspectives, and the changing languages of screen culture within a dedicated community setting.

May – November, ticket details to come

In partnership with Composite



MESS, 2025, Brunswick Music Festival. Courtesy the artists. Photo: Simon Fazio.

Residency / Workshops /

THINKING GROUND presented by Voice in my Hands

Led by VIMH (Liv Satchell and Julian Dibley-Hall), *THINKING GROUND* is an annual residency with a difference – inviting independent theatre artists to gather, connect and share ideas through communal learning and exchange.

Fridays in July, Free

Theatre / VCE Playlist /

Rakali presented by Lily Fish

A young couple move from suburban Narrm/Melbourne to live on a houseboat in remote Tasmania with their newborn baby. They think they've found paradise. But life on the river is less than idyllic. Enter the mysterious, charismatic Rocko – a man claiming to be their neighbour. Each of the couple are enchanted by Rocko; seduced by his attention and ability to reflect and affirm their secret yearnings. But Rocko is a shapeshifter – a carnivorous water rat, whose only desire is to steal and eat their baby.

“a comedic thriller of the highest degree” – *Theatre Travels*

3 – 14 June, tickets from \$25

This performance is supported by Next Wave

Visual Art / Festival /

Around the Block

Merri-Bek Moving-Image Outdoor Festival

Around the Block returns in 2026! This program will show new works by 12 artists across Blak Dot Gallery in Balam Balam Place and the Next Wave's windows along the iconic Sydney Road – with new artists showcased every fortnight over six weeks.

July – August

In partnership with Blak Dot Gallery, and supported by Merri-bek City Council



Around the Block / Winter Windows, featuring works by Liwen Lian and Axel Garay, 2025.
Photo: Tom Nobel.

Exhibition / Photography /

Art is not going to help this town,

Rachel Morley

Art is not going to help this town is a love letter to family, car trips, suburban housing estates and train stations. Reflecting on the ways that housing and travel infrastructure shape our lives, Rachel Morley and her family recreate their shared memories of Narm/Melbourne's western suburbs through a series of photographs and short films on super 8.

Through the use of "old" film cameras, nostalgia is employed as a means to shift the common narrative of outer suburban life. What is often labelled as an underprivileged and under-resourced region is viewed instead through the artist's rose-coloured childhood memories. It's cool to do donuts in the carpark with your dad, to do a drive-by and spy on the old house with your mum. With love and admiration at its core, this project draws connections between identity, behaviour and infrastructure through the lens of familial relationships.

Rachel Morley is an artist and arts worker based in Narm/Melbourne. Through analogue photography and photo-collage, her practice explores relationships to place and the construction of memory. Drawing on her experiences growing up, her past photographic works reflect on how power and inequality is created both within housing and through urban planning in Narm/Melbourne's outer western suburbs. She is currently exploring how familial relationships, behaviours and identities are shaped by suburban environments and infrastructure.

August – September, Free



Rachel Morley, *Art is not going to help this town* (detail), 2025, Kickstart, Narrm/Melbourne.
Courtesy the artist.

Exhibition /

What more do you want from me?, Kat Kats

A deeply compelling and radical act of exposure, exploring trauma, invisible disability, and the impacts of childhood sexual abuse, planned for presentation at Next Wave in 2026.

Kat Kats is a Naarm/Melbourne-based emerging artist, writer and theatre maker. This exhibition transforms her personal phone photo archive into a participatory installation that challenges conventional modes of spectatorship and authorship. This project's powerful and nuanced interrogation of identity, consent, and memory—through the lens of trauma and invisible disability—marks a bold and significant evolution in Kat Kat's practice, from text-based performance to large-scale visual installation.

October, Free

Visit our website for the latest information and tickets

Please note that tickets for some events/programs are yet to be released, but will be available closer to the event date.



Kat Kats, *What More Do You Want From Me?* (detail), 2025. Courtesy the Artist. Photo: Ascent Media.

Rehearse, test, develop, and share new works with us in 2026!

Next Wave's studio and theatre can be hired by artists, creative practitioners and cultural organisations for in-kind or affordable community rates.

We provide venue hire to support artists/creative practitioners as well as not-for-profits and small-to-medium arts organisations to undertake creative developments and/or deliver community arts initiatives in our space.

When you book venue hire with Next Wave, you help us continue to support early career artists through our mentorship programs and deliver artist-led workshops, events and activities.

[Learn more about our spaces and rates on our online booking platform](#)

You can also view live availability of the venue, make booking requests and more.



Yellow Wheel, *POLL DANCE*, 2025, Narrm/Melbourne. Choreographed by Kyall Shanks and Jacqui Maida in collaboration with the 2025 Yellow Wheel Company. Courtesy the artists. Photo: Lord Media.

Support Kickstart

Celebrating 25 years

Since 2001, Kickstart by Next Wave has been the only dedicated platform in Victoria providing early-career artists, across disciplines, with financial, curatorial, and production support to create new work at scale.

Your donation will support up to 10 artists from across Victoria to develop and present bold new work in 2026-27.

For many, Kickstart is the first time their ideas are resourced, their practice recognised, and their voice heard.

Every contribution directly supports an artist's creative journey:

\$500 helps fund mentoring and materials for one artist

\$1,000 supports professional development mentorships

\$5,000 supports public presentation costs

\$15,000 funds one artist's entire Kickstart experience



“To be connected to other artists and people in the industry is really important, particularly as a regional artist trying to find where I fit in or belong. As a POC and emerging artist, Kickstart was a really valuable experience to be part of a majority, for once. That’s huge.”

**Ellamay Khongroj Fitzgerald,
2024–25 Kickstart artist**

Show your support by making a donation

All donations are valued, and any amount over \$2 is tax deductible.



Harriet Gillies, *Lifestyle of the Richard and Family*, 2018, Next Wave Festival, Meat Market, Narm/Melbourne. Courtesy the Artist. Photo: Sneharcho Ghosh.

Over the past *25 years* Kickstart has supported hundreds of artists, including some of Australia's most vital and celebrated contemporary artists and curators:

Nana Biluš Abaffy
Eva Heiky Olga
Abbinga
Natalie Abbott
Abdul Abdullah
Sarah Aiken
Celeste Aldahn
Joshua Allen
An.Other collective
Lee Anantawat
Rachael Anderson
Asphyxia
Sarah Austin
Casey Ayres
Sean Bailey
Azja Kulpinska &
Timmah Ball
Bridget Balodis
Thomas Banks
Kristy Barnes-Cullen
Frances Barrett
Kat Barron
Jacklyn Bassanelli
Nathan Beard
Katherine Beckett
Katerina Bell
Amais Hanley &
Devika Bilmoria
Black Birds
Kate Blackmore
Matt Aitken &
Lyndon Blue
David Blumenstein
Bruno Booth
Make or Break

Nicole Breedon
Nigel Brown
Ben Brooker
Fiona Bryant
Michael Candy
Rebecca Cannon
Laura Castagnini
Jane Caught
Angus Cerini
Shaun Clarke
Danielle Clej
Annaliese Constable
Zoë Coombs Marr
Hannah Brontë
Megan Cope
Martyn Coutts
Jesse Cox
Elly Coyle
Alex Cuffe
Alison Currie
Tim Darbyshire
Jen Datu
Zoey Dawson
Keg de Souza
Kalanjay Dhir
Amy Dobson
Kelly Doley
Marcel Dorney
Nic Dorward
Lz Dunn
Sophie Dumaresq
Holly Durant
Ashley Dyer
Timothy Edser

George Egerton-
Warburton
Atlanta Eke
Rachael Feery
Emma Fishwick
Ellamay Khongroj
Fitzgerald
Trevor Flinn
Cecilia Fogelberg
Cait Foran
Danielle Freakely
Lady Producer Gang
Ghenoa Gela
Luke George
Dara Gill
Kel Glaister
Angela Goh
Ed Gould
Madeleine Griffith
Mish Grigor
Elham Eshragian-
Haakansson
Raghav Handa
Libby Harward
Christina Hayes
Esther Hayes
Rebecca Hayes
Ngioka Bunda-
Heath
Terry Helme
Melinda Hetzel
Rarriwuy Hick
Mark Hilton
Madeleine Hodge
Robin Hungerford

Matt Huynh
Estelle Ihasz
Georgia Lucy Ingall
Rosie Isaac
Daniel Jenatsch
Rebecca Jensen
Kerrie-Dee Johns
Colin Kinchela
Luke Duncan King
Matthew Kneale
Sime Knezevic
Ben Kolaitis
Loren Kronemyer
Shivanjani Lal
Kenzie Larsen
Alex Last
Shian Law
Christian Leavesley
Michele Lee
Neika Lehman
Rosie Leverton
Anna Liebzeit
Eugenia Lim
Keith Lim
Jessica Little
Morgan Little
Belinda Locke
Karl Logge
Nicolas Low
Que Minh Luu
Alisdair Macindoe
Brienna Macnish
fine print magazine
Frank Mainoo

Georgie Mattingley	Martyn Pedlar	Eddie Sharp	Louris van der Geer
Moreblessing	Oscar Perry	Carly Sheppard	Nick Verginis
Maturure	Christie Petsinis	Ian Sinclair	Rhanjell Villanueva
Katarnya Maynard	Teik-Kim Pok	Sancintya Mohini	Henry Jock Walker
Fiona Maxwell	Rani Pramesti	Simpson	Pip Wallis
Dan McCabe	Ryan Presley	Diana Smith	Tricky Walsh
Anna McCarthy	Matthew Prest	Brendan Snow	Gavin Walters
Patrick McCarthy	Michael Prior	Ria Soemardjo	Glen Walton
Andrew McCellan	Mark Pritchard	Rhen Soggee	Roshelle Fong & Keziah Warner
Ruth McConchie	Zachary Pidd & Charles Purcell	Amy Spiers	Sapna Chandu & Michael Warnock
Rob McCredie	Hannah Raisin	Roderick Sprigg	New Wayfinders
Rafaella McDonald	Nat Randall	Pip Stafford	Isabella Whāwhai Waru
Rennie McDougall	Tessa Rapaport	Giselle	Geoffrey Watson
Georgie Meyer	Re-Right Collective	Stanborough	Ivey Wawn
Rachel Meyers	Kiah Reading	Kate Stanley	Warraba Weatherall
Tanja Milbourne	Peter Reid	Prue Stevenson	Willoh S Weiland
Bennett Miller	Bec Reid	Esther Stewart	James Welsby
Sebastian Moody	Danielle Reynolds	Lisa Stewart	Katie West
Rachel Morley	Josh Muir & Adam Ridgeway	Billie Stone	Malcolm Whittaker
Louise Morris	Harriet Ritchie	Kate Sulan	Mike Williams
Alice Mrongovius	Harrison Ritchie- Jones	Kim Swalwell	Alice Williams
Martina Mrongovius	Claire Robertson	Kieran Swann	Jayda Wilson
Ivy Mukutu	Phoebe Robinson	Embittered Swish	Allison Wiltshire
Phip Murray	Julia Robinson	Hiromi Tango	Benny Woo
Phuong Ngo	Sarah Rodigari	Shireen Taweel	Delali Zevon- Aniakwah
Que Nguyen	Phil Rolfe	Alex Tate & Olivia Tartaglia	Joel Zika
Joseph O'Farrell	Natalie Rose	Lauren Taylor	Liesel Zink
Miles O'Neill	Sam Routledge	TextaQueen	+ more to come
Jessica O'Brian	Taree Sansbury	Athena Thebus	
Jessica Olivieri	Daniel Santangeli	Lara Thoms	
Andy Butler & Nanette Orly	Zoe Scoglio	Jensen Tjhung	
Lay the Mystic & Efren Pamilacan	Jessie Scott	Steven Toulmin	
Steaphan Paton		Jessie Tucker	
		Jocelyn Tribe	

Our partners

Program Partners



Beit e'Shai

BLINDED IS

CAST



Composite: Moving
Image Agency &
Media Bank



midsumma
festival

**SPEAK
PERCUSSION**

UNDERARTS



AN INDEPENDENT THEATRE COMPANY

Funding Partners



**CREATIVE
VICTORIA**



**Merri-bek
City Council**

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MERRI-BEK**



Australian Government



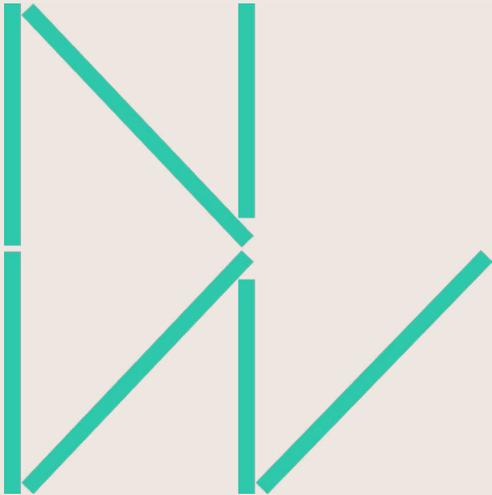
Bar partners


HAWKERS
MELBOURNE-BREWED INDEPENDENT BEER

**NOISY
RITUAL**
URBAN WINERY



Zela Papageorgiou, *Tidelines*, 2025, Next Wave, Melbourne. Presented in collaboration with Speak Percussion. Courtesy the artist. Photo: Darren Gill.



Our home

Brunswick Mechanics Institute
270 Sydney Road
Bulleke-bek (Brunswick)
Wurundjeri Country VIC 3056

Get in touch

next@nextwave.org.au

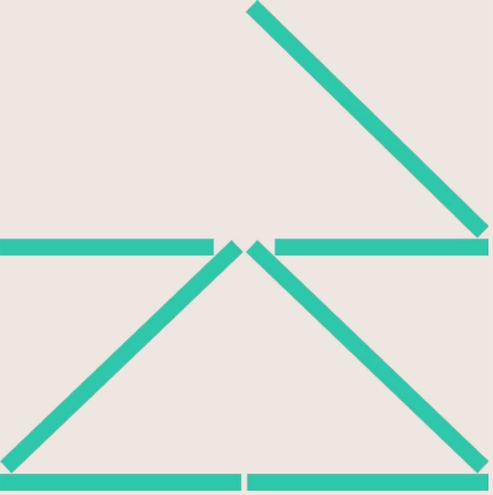
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Join the community

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LinkedIn: [@next-wave-arts](https://www.linkedin.com/company/next-wave-arts)



Next Wave acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional custodians of the unceded lands and waterways on which we work and create. We pay our respects to all First Peoples and their Elders, past and present, as the custodians of the world's oldest continuous living culture. We are privileged to share in the act of art making and culture building – grounded on justice, friendship and care. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.