

Submission:

Opinion | The Art Revolution

By Julie Collins: djprojects

For decades, commercial galleries were the beating heart of the contemporary art world. Careers were built, ideas were championed and communities gathered in spaces that valued creativity over commerce. That model is now under strain. Rents are rising, sales are unpredictable and the global art fair circuit has shifted from opportunity to burden. Galleries across the world are closing, while mid-tier spaces in Australia disappear quietly. This is not only a financial crisis, but also philosophical. It is easy to blame the cost of living, global instability and economic uncertainty, but ultimately the art industry must take responsibility.

As a gallery in a somewhat regional setting, we work harder to attract curators, collectors and institutions. Harder to ensure our artists receive the recognition they deserve, so we have considered hopping on the art fair treadmill. The problem is, if we poured our budget into art fairs, we would be gambling on visibility at the expense of sustainability, integrity and real public engagement. Fairs were once occasional chances to step onto a bigger stage. One every couple of years made sense.

Now there are too many. Costs are enormous. Collector behaviour has changed and they have become a "Bunnings experience": efficient, predictable and entirely transactional. To cover fair fees, galleries lean toward safe, saleable artists, so we are seeing less innovation, curatorial risk and as a result artistic experimentation decline. Contemporary art becomes flattened and sanitised for quick consumption. Another ripple effect is now many collector are waiting for the next fair rather than visiting galleries, so we have fewer people engaging deeply with the work via solo exhibitions, developing visual literacy and connecting with the artist.

Auction houses have also expanded into the primary market, representing living artists and hosting new work. Their global reach and elite client bases make them impossible competitors for most galleries. Exposure and fast sales can be tempting for artists but often come without the long-term support that galleries have historically provided. The space for genuine artistic growth keeps shrinking.

Then came the demise (or Pause?) of the Art Money scheme, which removed a vital lifeline gallery to encourage new collectors and has slowed sales across the sector.

Before I became a gallery director, I was and remain a sculptor. 40 years of art making, 33 solo exhibitions and 122 group shows have taught me to recognise when change is necessary. I have always been an artist who wanted to see good things to happen, and this has led me through education, small business, hospitality, marketing, local government and almost three decades of curating. I see the industry from many angles, and what I see now is a tipping point.

We have contributed to our own problem. We have allowed an elitist atmosphere to grow around collecting. Many people believe art ownership is only for the wealthy. Meanwhile, the middle class buys mass-produced décor that often costs as much as original art. The difference is belief: people feel safer buying what is familiar and widely accepted.

So how do we shift that belief? How do we make original art part of everyday life?

We can look to the food industry. Twenty years ago, food became pop culture. Chefs became household celebrity names. Television made quality accessible and desirable. Consumers became confident.

Art Collecting can make the same cultural leap if we strive for behavioural change, championed by accessible media platforms of storytelling, human connection and improved financial access. Let's encourage our parents and grandparents to bequest art collecting funds to their children and grandchildren. Promote enhanced tax incentives for businesses to encourage collecting and visibility. Set up a government-backed Art Collectors Fund to replace and strengthen what Art Money began. And invested into a national **Living with Art** campaign to drive the message of the benefits of collecting art by living artists.

The art world must stop waiting for audiences to come to us. We must go to them and develop the next generation of everybody collectors. We must build opportunities that prioritise creativity over hype and connection over spectacle.

Leonardo da Vinci said that people of accomplishment do not sit back and let things happen. They go out and happen to things.

It is time to happen to things.

That is the Art Revolution.

I invite you to join us.

Ideas for the Art Revolution - Living with Art - Pilot

I believe the arts programming on the ABC is lazy and continuously reverts to the celebrity to promote the arts. The same people are profiled on rotation through the small art shows presented. We need to expend the reach, not dumb the content down but elevate and educate society to accept art and artists into their lives.

Join us on a mission to revolutionize the way Australia views and values original art by living artists. "Living with Art" is not just a TV series; it's a movement to bring art into the mainstream, empowering artists and inspiring Australians to live with art.

Pitch: In Australia, the perception of buying original art by living artists is often relegated to the realm of the elite—a hobby reserved for the wealthy or those with excess disposable income. But what if we could change that narrative? What if we could transform art from a luxury into a necessity—a vital part of everyone's homes?

Our approach is simple yet revolutionary: we're taking art out of the galleries and into the living rooms of everyday Australians, not as a side note to a lifestyle show. Through a captivating TV series, we'll showcase the transformative power of art as we follow the journey of suburban families, guided by a team of passionate art enthusiasts, to rediscover the beauty of their homes through the story telling of original artwork.

Imagine a country where every household proudly displays original art by living artists—not as a status symbol, but as a testament to their appreciation for creativity and culture. "Living with Art" aims to make that vision a reality by challenging perceptions, sparking conversations, and fostering a sense of community around art appreciation and ownership.

With support, we can create a TV pilot that captures the spirit of "Art Revolution" and pitches it to commercial TV and streaming platforms, reaching beyond the traditional arts audience to inspire a nation to embrace the art in their lives. Together, we can transform Australia into a nation that values and celebrates art by living artists.

Title: **Living with Art – The Pilot**

In " **Living with Art** " a suburban family's mundane world transforms into a vibrant celebration of creativity as they embark on a journey of discovery guided by a team of passionate art enthusiasts, sparking newfound connections with artists and a reimagined sense of home.

Synopsis: " **Living with Art** " is a heart-warming family reality series that follows the transformation of the everyday lives of Eliza & Chris' family as they venture into the realm of art, guided by the expertise of the Curator and the djprojects team.

The pilot episode opens with a young suburban family staying at the & Art Motel, Tookgarook, over the weekend in which they visit & Gallery in Sorrento, as well as other activities in the region. Conversations start about living with art, sparked through the stay at the art Motel and an introduction to & Gallery Australia, where the & Curator, Julie Collins sets the stage for the importance of supporting living artists. It is here that Chris and Eliza agree to have the djprojects team come to their house to pitch some ideas.

As the djprojects team embarks on a scenic drive along Beach Road, viewers catch a glimpse of beautiful Mornington Peninsula before they arrive at Chris & Eliza's Mentone home, adorned with a few mass-produced prints and decorator furnishings and lots of white walls. Once acquainted with the family, the curator and the djprojects team dive into assessing the existing decor and engaging the family in discussions about their preferences. With a budget in mind, they head back to the gallery to explore options and make selections that resonate with the family's taste and values.

As the family heads out for the day, the djprojects team gets to work, replacing decorator art with original pieces by living artists. The transformation is palpable as the family returns home to discover it transformed, setting the stage for a celebratory art house opening event. The finale culminates in an evening filled with art, laughter, and newfound connections as friends and family get to socialise with the artists and learn about the art works. Through these conversations with the artists, the audience learns a little about the pieces and the artists who created them, and guests are inspired to embrace the world of original art, expanding more opportunities for living artists.

A follow up session with the family asking how the experience has been and if they like the art they have.

Living with Art offers a refreshing take on reality television, showcasing the transformative power of owning original art and normalising it. Through the lens of the djprojects, viewers are invited to make original art by Australia artists apart of their everyday life.

Art Collectors Fund

A Federal Initiative to Support Artists, Galleries, and to Encourage Art Collecting

Purpose

To strengthen Australia's visual arts ecosystem by making art ownership more accessible while providing direct financial support to artists and galleries. Covering high-end commercial galleries to artist-run initiatives, the Art Collectors Fund will offer collectors interest free loans for art purchases, funded by the Federal Government and managed by Artbank, creating a sustainable mechanism to stimulate the cultural economy and broaden public participation in art collecting.

Background

Art Money, an Australian fintech company (2015–2024), pioneered interest-free, 10-month instalment plans for artworks priced between \$500–\$100,000. Founded by Paul Becker, it aimed to make art accessible to new collectors.

- Initial support: \$60,000 seed funding from the City of Sydney.
- By 2016: Expanded to 140+ galleries nationwide, generating \$1.7M in sales.
- Peak: Partnered with 1,500+ galleries across Australia, NZ, USA, and UK, facilitating \$100M+ in art sales.
- 2024: Operations paused due to financial challenges, demonstrating the potential for a federally backed scheme to succeed where private finance struggled.

Proposed Program Model

- Buyers: Pay off artworks over 10 months, interest-free.
- Artists & Galleries: Receive full payment within 10 business days (minus 10% administration fee).
- Government / Artbank: Provide capital, manage loans, ensure compliance, and recycle repayments.

10% of funded purchases cover administration and marketing.

Marketing of the program is key to its expansion of collecting in this country, I proposed the 10% is put back into behavioural change campaigns.

Key Benefits

- Income Stability: Immediate payment for artists and galleries.
- Market Expansion: Enables broader participation in art collecting.
- Regional Reach: Accessible to all galleries and artists nationwide.
- Cultural Growth: Builds long-term engagement with Australian creativity.

- Financial Sustainability: Revolving fund model ensures continuous funding.
- Funding Proposal
- Federal Seed Fund: \$20M revolving loan pool
 - Annual Administration & Marketing: \$2M
 - Projected Outcomes: \$60–\$80M in annual art sales, supporting 3,000+ artists and 500+ galleries.

Next Steps

1. Federal endorsement and integration within Creative Australia's cultural investment strategy.
2. Establish program governance under Artbank.
3. National launch of the Art Collectors Fund.

Australian Artists and Filmmakers — Not Seen, Not Valued

Australia has a serious cultural problem: we consistently undervalue our own artists and filmmakers.

If we look at institutions such as the National Gallery of Victoria, the major “blockbuster” exhibitions are overwhelmingly international. Increasingly, they are driven by fashion, design, celebrity, and global brand recognition, with Australian art often appearing only occasionally between these large imported spectacles.

These exhibitions attract major sponsorship because sponsors see proven commercial success, global prestige, and strong audience numbers. Over time, this creates a cycle: the more successful overseas blockbusters become, the more corporate sponsors are conditioned to believe that cultural value only comes from overseas.

As a result, Australian artists struggle to achieve the same level of institutional investment, visibility, marketing support, and public recognition.

This is not because Australian art lacks quality. It is because Australian art lacks sustained strategic promotion.

If our major institutions invested the same scale of marketing budgets into Australian retrospectives, survey exhibitions, and contemporary Australian artists as they do into international blockbusters, public perception would begin to shift. Audiences value what they are taught to value.

The same issue exists in the **Australian film industry**.

I am relatively new to the cinema sector, with our small community cinema opening this August. Earlier this year I attended the Independent Cinema Conference in Melbourne, where one message was repeated consistently throughout discussions: Australia is producing strong content, but people are not seeing it. Australian stories are not being valued. As I go through the back catalogues of Australian films there is little that is familiar or entranced in our psyche. Screen Australia provides seed funding but no significant marketing to help Australian film makers expend audiences.

The art world and the film industry share the same underlying problem. We do not have a coordinated national strategy to build cultural pride and audience engagement around Australian creative work.

This issue cannot simply be solved by “throwing more money” at institutions. What is needed is strategic behavioural and cultural change.

Government, institutions, sponsors, cinemas, galleries, broadcasters, and marketers need to work together on a comprehensive long-term campaign that changes the way Australians perceive Australian art and film.

Part of that conversation should include leaders in behavioural change and public communication, such as Bill Shannon from The Shannon Company. Australia has previously undertaken successful national behavioural campaigns — from road safety to public health — that fundamentally shifted public attitudes and habits. Cultural value is also shaped through repetition, visibility, and storytelling. If Australians continually see imported culture presented as the pinnacle of artistic achievement, while local work is under-promoted and underfunded, we should not be surprised when audiences and sponsors follow that lead.

This is a significant challenge, but it is also an enormous opportunity. Australia has extraordinary artists, filmmakers, writers, musicians, and storytellers. What we lack is not talent — it is belief, visibility, and coordinated national support. Until Australian creative work is consistently seen, it will continue to be undervalued.

Recent events- Venice

It would be amiss of me not to make comment on the Venice debacle. As a previous Public art Coordinator in local government, risk assessment was the first thing I did when developing a commission document. This was not to censor, or to govern the original selection, it was to foresee any potential issues, community complaints or internal pressure. The risk assessment was a plan response in a way the artist, the selection panel and decision was protected.

The way the situation was handled was akin to an artist run space and was not one of our lead arts body. Media pile ons, political pressures, perceived or real, lobby groups and management personal opinions should never have led to the cancellation.

I have been recently discussing potential curator/ artist applications for Venice 2028 and many artists don't want to be involved as they don't feel safe..they feel if the media whipped up a frenzy, Creative Australia could throw them under the bus.

This is the ongoing damage that Creative Australia has created. Essentially they have created an unsafe workplace for Australian Artist.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity, I hope we see sustainable change in the fortunes of Australian Artists and Film Makers.

Julie Collins



Julie Collins has been described as a sculptor who simply wants to see good things happen. That passion has driven an expansive curatorial and consultancy practice, underpinned by an unwavering commitment to raising the profile of Australian artists and supporting contemporary creative culture.

Julie is an accomplished independent curator who has successfully managed more than 70 curated projects. She is the owner and curator of & Gallery Australia and leads a range of initiatives under the djprojects, creating opportunities for artists through exhibitions, residencies, collaborations, publishing, and public engagement.

Julie is also the founder of the Art Motel in Tootgarook, which includes an artist residency and creative development program supporting emerging and established practitioners from across Australia.

Most recently, Julie has been has led the development of the Sorrento Cinema, helping foster a contemporary community-focused cinema experience that reconnects audiences with independent film and local storytelling.

As a sculptor in her own right, Julie brings a highly developed understanding of aesthetics, materials, and spatial practice. With more than 150 exhibitions to her name, she possesses extensive experience delivering complex creative projects across galleries and alternative spaces. She holds a Master of Visual Art from Federation University Australia and a Bachelor of Arts (Fine Art) from Victorian College of the Arts – Prahran. Julie has also taught at both the Victorian College of the Arts and RMIT University, and her work is held in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria as well as in private collections nationally.

www.djprojects.net

www.angalleryaustralia.net

www.artmotel.net

www.andindependents.net

www.sorrentocinema.net