

# 'SHOW YOUR WEST-SIDE' – ART FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE

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By LaDY MoHaWK (aka Sally Walshe)

**I listened to a podcast recently about new and developing 'Ghost Towns'. These are places that were often a previously thriving Metropolis but are now empty and lifeless. 'Ghost-towns' can develop quickly: A main highway gets rerouted, or a community just stops caring about it. People stop investing in their local community, stop advocating for it, and even just stop talking about it. Businesses dry up and people move away.**

This happens in suburbs and cities too. I have noticed it in areas of Melbourne. For some reason these places become desolate. There is no pulse and it shows. The buildings are decrepit and people move through it, facelessly.

I live in Footscray, and it made me start thinking whether I wanted to sit by, grumbling about issues, and do nothing? We are the sum of our community, after all. The lack of art and artist programs in an area is often a symptom of an unhealthy and fragile society. Art has the power to change lives and improve society. It brings cultures together, lets people tell their stories, feeds the soul of the community, and essentially gives it a pulse.

Currently there are limited opportunities for visual artists to showcase their artwork in and around Footscray. Our creative community is starved of opportunities to exhibit artwork in the place that they live and love. Without rich, diverse, and truly inclusive art programs, the featured voices will be curated and exclusive. We need events like pop up galleries in disused buildings, regular small art gatherings, invitations to participate in themed and diverse art exhibitions.

I created the *Show Your WEST-SIDE* exhibition, with Footscray Traders Association, to give a voice to local visual artists – budding and professionals. This includes children. There are so few opportunities for children to feel a spark, something that ignites from within, that is beyond getting 'Student of the Week' (which is not actually a prize as all kids get it). Some children hold such little hope in their lives that simply having their art (or talent) noticed is enough to keep them going. I was this child.

When I was 5 our school art teacher told us we had to make an art piece for a competition. I made a picture of a woman with a veil over her head. My friend Suzie told me it was silly and that I should change it. Suzie was my best friend and she called the shots. I kind of believed her but I did not change it, and I won that award. The Mayor of Brighton gave me a prize and I attended a ceremony to receive it. Up yours Suzie.

But in all seriousness, it left an imprint and perhaps a bit of hope in me, when there was not that much – because children need a space to feel like they can achieve too. Everyone involved in the 'Show Your WEST-SIDE' exhibition has done so with enthusiastic and unbridled support; from Footscray Traders Association, to Maribyrnong City Council and all the sponsors – Cheaper Buy Miles, Community Bank Seddon, Trimson Partners Real Estate, MP Katie Hall, Littlefoot Bar and Two Birds Brewing. Even the businesses who have let me put up my posters. They have all said "yes!".

The aim for this free event is to showcase as many local creatives as possible, from school aged and up. Anyone who lives, works, or studies in the City of Maribyrnong can apply. The application for the exhibition is FREE and closes on 16 June 2023.

The exhibition will run from 14 July to 11 August 2023, at the Footscray Connectivity Centre, 138 Nicholson St, right in the heart of Footscray. There will be seven prizes including two student prizes, totalling over \$4,500.

We need authentic, purpose-driven visual arts events for the community, driven by the community, in and around Footscray. We do not want to become a ghost town, or even worse, a wasteland.

**To apply, follow the link <https://form.jotform.com/230788639860875>**

**Opening Night 14 July, 530pm -830pm, 138 Nicholson Street, Footscray**

Email [Sally@ladymohawk.com.au](mailto:Sally@ladymohawk.com.au)

### **About LaDY MoHaWK**

*LaDY MoHaWK (aka Sally Walshe) is a community minded local Footscray artist, predominantly working in lino printing and regularly runs workshops for adults and children.*

Instagram [@Lady.Mohawk](#)

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*Show your Westside – celebrating creatives living in the west.*

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