



# Melbourne's Groovy Street Art

A handy guide with insider tips on who's who and what's where in Melbourne's street art-crammed laneways. **By Malavika Bhattacharya**

A teenager spray painting on a wall in Hosier Lane, in Central Business District.

Instagram fiends, take note: Melbourne's laneways are filled with gram-worthy moments, if you know where to look. With street art splattered liberally across its buildings and non-descript corners, **the city is an open-air museum of murals,** stencils, graffiti, and installations.

Though the concept of art in public spaces has been around for decades,

street art in Melbourne began as a fledgling movement in the early 2000s. Back then, its legality was a grey area, and even now, there remains a distinction between graffiti and street art. The latter is an accepted (and legal) form of expression, with departments of the city government often commissioning pieces to liven up public spaces. In fact, the subculture has organised itself into various



collectives and artist management studios that routinely schedule exhibitions and street art festivals, curate works for events, and offer residencies to visiting international artists. A city-run programme offers young street artists a platform for mentorship and collaboration with established names.

To get under the skin of this Melbourne subculture, I walk the laneways of Melbourne with eminent street artist Rone, who's been in the scene for a decade and a half.

### Where's the art at?

Mention street art in Melbourne, and **Hosier Lane** is a name that's sure to pop up. The narrow laneway in the city centre is among Melbourne's best-known street art venues, crammed with a dizzying array of

**Crammed with a dizzying array of colours, the walls of Melbourne's famous lanes change constantly. No two visits are the same.**

### WALL TO WALL

*If you're in Melbourne in March, take a short trip to Victoria, located north east of the city, for their annual Wall To Wall Street Art Festival organised by Judy Roller. It's a crowd funded event that draws thousands of artists and art enthusiasts.*  
judyroller.com.au



### LOOK OUT FOR

► The **Juddy Roller** studio is on an alley connecting Johnston Street and Chapel Street. The studio is open to public if there's an exhibit or event, but the area around it houses some of the most interesting and eye catching works, including Adnate, Kaff-eine, and Smug's creations. Stag heads on human bodies and other animal-human hybrid art pieces are usually Kaff-eine's work, abundant in this area.

► If you spot calligraphic style lettering in swirly black and white, it's the trademark work of **Mayonaize**. One of the best places to see his creations on display is the exterior of The Stone Hotel on Brunswick Street. Look closely: the artistic font actually spells out the word 'Mayonaize'. Also in the area is **The Bogan**, a fairly controversial piece depicting a man smoking a cigarette, holding a beer, and eating a ketchup-covered pie.



The Bogan is a collaboration of artists Adnate, Smug, and Sofles on Leiceiter Street. Above: Artist Mayonaize works at Everfresh Studio.





## Street Art Legacy

While each person will have their own favourites walking through the city, it's worth taking a detour to some iconic works of art.

In the 1980s, when the street art scene was booming in New York, eminent American artist **Keith Haring** visited Melbourne to create a series of public art projects. During this visit in 1984, he created a mural on the exterior of a building that was then the Collingwood Technical College. With his trademark figures outlined in red and blue, the late artist's work still stands today on Johnston Street in Collingwood. **Today, only 31 of Haring's public works remain around the world, and this piece in Melbourne was carefully restored** after a bid to preserve the creation. This is definitely an important stop for both art enthusiasts and anyone interested in Melbourne's street art legacy.

**“There’s an aggressive competitive spirit to paint over someone else’s work. It’s an ego sport.”**

colours across every available surface. The works change constantly and no two visits here are the same. **Nearby Union Lane is where nearly 50 street artists** have created a mural as part of the city’s mentorship programme. Along with the **Rutledge Lane**, opposite Federation Square, and **ACDC lane**, an homage to the homegrown rock band, this is an art-filled precinct in the city centre worth spending some time in.

Art has spilled out from the centre into alternative neighbourhoods in Melbourne’s suburbs. **The grungy, creative suburb of Fitzroy is another hub of street artists**, filled with studios, iconic works, and hidden gems. Start at the **Rose Street** car park, where the pillars and walls are a canvas for several local artists’ work, all of which blend into each other. “There’s an aggressive competitive spirit to paint over someone else’s work. It’s an ego sport,” says Rone. Explore the laneways off **Fitzroy Street**, and wander down **Brunswick Street**, **Chapel Street**, and **Wood Street** while in the neighbourhood.

## Artists

From thousands of murals, stencils, and pieces of graffiti across the city, it can sometimes be hard to tell when you’ve spotted a masterpiece. It helps, to some extent, to know who to keep an eye out for. Works



Creative Graffiti on Johnston Street, Melbourne. Above: Keith Haring stands against a wall bearing his artwork.

JACK MITCHELL/GETTY IMAGES; DREAMTIME





### A GOOD FIND!

On the outer façade of The Night Cat, a popular club in Fitzroy, Everfresh Studio has created a massive, monochrome mural that reads 'Welcome to Sunny Fitzroy, from Everfresh'. It's intricate and in your face.

From above: The monochrome mural on the outer façade of The Night Cat, Fitzroy; artist Rone strikes a pose on a bylane in Melbourne.



### INSIDER TIPS

"Look up", says long time Australian artist Nicole Tattersall. Street art is not always at eye level, so remember to crane your neck to spot some real hidden gems. Murals are temporary, and what you see today may be gone today. Rivalries and an unwritten code amidst the street art community lead to works sometimes being defaced or replaced. The transient nature of street art is best explained when Rone says, "If something isn't worth keeping up, you paint over it". If there's a bit of work you've been meaning to check out, it's best to do it now.

are usually marked with an artist's name, and once you're familiar with some trademark styles, it's pretty easy to make a game of 'identify the artist'.

Known for his lifelike murals of women, Rone is an internationally recognised artist whose works can be seen around the world. For example, **artist Kaff-eine's work is melancholy and often whimsical**, featuring animals, children, and fantastical characters, while Meggs, along with Rone, is a founding member of **Everfresh Studios**, which is known for its murals and stencils found across the city. The collective includes nine Melbourne street artists, and is a platform to collaborate and create unique works of street art around the city. **Other names to watch out for include Nost, Sofles, Smug, and Ha Ha.** Adnate creates beautiful portraits, most recognisable by their haunting eyes.

Exhibitions and events are often curated or hosted by **Juddy Roller**, an artist management company that works with established and up-and-coming Melbourne street artists. ■