



## **Divine Intervention: Metro Arts returns with heaven-sent contemporary art and experimental performance**

### **MEDIA ALERT: For immediate release**

What does the future of Australian contemporary art look like? This July, Metro Arts invites audiences to find out.

Launching a new season of performances and exhibitions for the second half of 2026, Metro Arts presents two major projects that celebrate the experimental, the provocative and the yet-to-be-discovered: the world premiere of Jag Popham's visceral dance work *god eater* and *the 2026 churchie emerging art prize Finalists' Exhibition*.

Together, they signal a renewed commitment to what Metro Arts has done for more than four decades: championing artists at the leading edge of contemporary practice and creating space for audiences to encounter new ideas before they appear anywhere else.

Metro Arts CEO Kieran Swann said, "Metro Arts exists for artists who are making something genuinely new and for audiences who want to be surprised, challenged and inspired. We're interested in work that takes risks. Work that asks questions. Work that creates experiences you won't find anywhere else in Brisbane."

### **Devouring the divine**

The season opens with *god eater*, a striking new solo work by New Zealand-born, regional Queensland-based artist Jag Popham.

A company dancer with internationally acclaimed Dancenorth, Popham has developed a reputation for immersive and physically rigorous work drawing on martial arts, breathwork, sound design, ritual and transformation.

Driven by a primal, pulsing soundscape, *god eater* shifts between explosive physical intensity, stark stillness and uncanny tenderness. Encased within a shell-like body armour that slowly mutates and sheds, Popham appears to move between human, creature and something less easily named.

Part performance, part transformation ritual, *god eater* reflects Metro Arts' commitment to investing in ambitious new work at crucial stages of development and showcasing exceptional artistic talent from all of Queensland.

"The work asks for trust in slowness, silence, and mystery; allowing the experience to move through the body before the mind tries to explain it", said Jag Popham.

Popham has been dancing since the age of 3, and has worked with the internationally acclaimed Dancenorth since early 2025. He is a regular collaborator of Brisbane's Studio1 dance hub.

### **Discovering the next generation**

Hot on the heels of *god eater*, Metro Arts will present the churchie emerging art prize 2026 Finalists' Exhibition, bringing together some of the most exciting emerging contemporary artists working in Australia today.

Established in 1987, the churchie is Australia's largest and one of its longest-running art prizes dedicated to emerging artists. Now in its 39th year, the churchie returns to Metro Arts for a third consecutive year, creating a nationally significant platform for artists at pivotal moments in their careers.

The exhibition has a long history of identifying artists before they become household names within the contemporary art sector. Past winners include Michaela Gleave, Emily Parsons-Lord and Metro Arts alumni Caitlin Franzmann, while many finalists, commendation recipients and winners have gone on to establish significant national careers.

This year's finalists were selected by members of the churchie committee alongside Metro Arts Curator, Rachel O'Reilly and Outer Space Director, Holly Campbell, with the final prize recipient to be chosen by guest judge Jason Smith, Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia.

Diane Cross, the churchie Chair said, "For nearly four decades, 'the churchie' has embodied an enduring commitment to emerging artists, establishing itself as one of Australia's most significant art prizes. Made possible by the generosity of our sponsors, esteemed curators, and the dedication of committee members past and present, the prize continues to celebrate exceptional emerging artistic talent while inspiring audiences. We are delighted to continue our partnership with Metro Arts in presenting this year's exhibition, a fitting venue that champions artistic excellence, innovation, and creative possibility."

### **New beginnings**

While the projects differ in form, both embody a shared belief in experimentation, discovery and artistic possibility.

For Metro Arts, they also mark the beginning of a new public chapter following a period of organisational renewal and strategic investment in artist development. Additional programming for the July-December season will be announced in mid-June.

Metro Arts CEO Kieran Swann teases the new announcements. "Expect hot new performance, ambitious exhibitions and artists you'll be talking about long before everyone else catches on. For more than 45 years, Metro Arts has backed bold ideas and exciting artists. We're building on that legacy with a new generation of work for audiences who want to discover what's next.

Bold, brave and curious art for bold, brave and curious audiences."

More information now available via <https://metroarts.com.au/whats-on/>

### **EVENT INFORMATION**

*god eater*

Artist: Jag Popham

1-4 July 2026

*the churchie emerging art prize 2026 Finalists' Exhibition*

Opening and Prize Announcement: 24 July 2026, 6pm-8pm

Exhibition: 25 July - 8 August 2026

Images available

[IMAGES the churchie available](#)

[IMAGES - god eater available](#) - credit Jade Ellis.

Get in touch:

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### About Metro Arts

**Metro Arts centres Australian artists and experimentation.**

In 2026-27, Metro Arts is embarking on a deliberate “rewiring” of our operations, programming and partnerships. This transformational process is strengthening internal systems, deepening philanthropic relationships, embedding entrepreneurial and sustainable practices, and refining strategy to better support artists and future-focused practice. These efforts lay the foundation for the organisation’s next chapter as we approach our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Brisbane’s Cultural Olympiad for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

With a profound 45 year legacy, Metro Arts is at the forefront of nurturing Australian creative talent, serving as an incubator and launchpad for some of the country's finest artists. Metro Arts is equipped with state-of-the-art galleries, artist studios and theatre facilities, all located along the old Peters Ice-cream Factory Lane, within the thriving West Village precinct in West End. Their workshop facility at Norman Park provides vital space for visual artists to create, build and experiment supported by Brisbane City Council.



Australian Government



Australian Government

Visual Art, Craft and Design Framework



Queensland  
Government



*Dedicated to a better Brisbane*

Metro Arts Program is supported by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its funding and advisory body. Metro Arts is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland and the Visual Art, Craft and Design Framework, an initiative of the Australian, state and territory governments. The Metro Arts Creative Development Program and Artist in Residence Program is proudly supported by Brisbane City Council. Metro Arts Visual Arts (MAVA) Substation is assisted by Brisbane City Council.